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Hammer's GERMAN Grammar and Usage

sixth edition

Martin Durrell

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Abbreviations and points for the user

Points

1 Lists of words are in general alphabetical, unless it appeared more helpful to the user to present them in a different order.

2 Where required, the plural of a noun is indicated within brackets after the noun, e.g. *das Lager (-)*, i.e. *die Lager*; *der Hut (¨e)*, i.e. *die Hüte*, etc. *(-en, -en)* or *(-n, -n)* indicate a weak masculine noun, e.g. *der Mensch, des Menschen, die Menschen* (see **1.3.2**).

3 If necessary, a stressed syllable in a word is indicated by the mark placed before the stressed syllable, and/or by the use of bold type, e.g. *die Dok*P**tor***en*, *unter*P**schreib***en*. Where it is required, a stressed word in context is shown by underlining, e.g. *Wie bist du denn gekommen?*

4 Sentences used for illustration which are ungrammatical in German are indicated by an asterisk, e.g. **Jedoch dann ist er nicht gekommen.*

5 Grammatical terms given in small capitals at the beginning of the relevant chapter or section are explained in the glossary.

Abbreviations

In principle, abbreviations have been kept to a minimum. The following have been used where required by considerations of space.

abbrev.	abbreviated
acad.	academic

A., acc.	accusative
adj.	adjective
arch.	archaic
Au., Austr.	Austrian
aux.	auxiliary
Bav.	Bavarian
ch.	chapter
cl.	clause
coll.	colloquial
conj.	conjunction
D., dat.	dative
elev.	elevated
esp.	especially
etw.	etwas
fem.	feminine
form.	formal
G., gen.	genitive
hist.	historical
indic.	indicative
inf.	informal
jd.	jemand
jdm.	jemandem
jdn.	jemanden
lang.	language
lit.	literary
masc.	masculine
N., nom.	nominative
neut.	neuter
N.G., N. Ger.	North German
obs.	obsolete
occ.	occasionally
o.s.	oneself
part.	participle
pej.	pejorative
pl.	plural
prep.	preposition
reg.	regional

S.G., S. Ger.	South German
sb.	somebody
sg., sing.	singular
sub. cl.	subordinate clause
sth.	something
Sw.	Switzerland, Swiss
techn.	technical
vb.	verb
vulg.	vulgar

Preface to the sixth edition

The fifth edition of *Hammer's German Grammar and Usage* which appeared in 2011 was subsequently taken over by Routledge, and the new publisher undertook a comprehensive survey of users of the work at schools and universities in Britain and the USA. The comments and suggestions they kindly provided prompted a thoroughgoing reconsideration of the structure and organization of the work which has resulted in this new edition. In previous editions I had been concerned to retain the basic format with only minor changes to the numbering and content of individual sections in order to facilitate cross-reference between editions. It was clear that this was not a major issue for users of the work, and for this edition I have undertaken a number of alterations in the interest of consistency and coherence, as well as to improve the accessibility of the material. Thus, the separate chapters on 'Comparison of adjectives and adverbs' and 'Expressions of time', which had in practice been retained from A.E. Hammer's original edition of 1971 on the basis of unjustified assumptions about user preferences, have been eliminated and their content placed in more appropriate sections, so that, for example, all the information on the use of an individual preposition is now in one place rather than in separate sections. In addition, following suggestions by the users, more tables have been provided, and as far as possible the most important information in each chapter is summarized at the start of the chapter, together with particulars on where further detail on specific features can be found within the chapter. This restructuring has also necessitated a complete revision of the index.

Like all previous revisions, this revision is founded on the basic principle that the work should be a comprehensive descriptive account of modern German for the use of the advanced learner or student of the language whose first language is English – or who can approach

German through English, since I am aware that the book has been widely used in other countries. This aim implies that it should cover the whole gamut of variation in usage within modern German, not simply the most prestigious written form which is still, unfortunately, used too exclusively in many teaching manuals, even when they purport to present examples of spoken language. Thus, considerable attention has been paid to giving information on usage in registers other than formal writing or literature, and details given on everyday speech. This also reflects the greater emphasis paid to oral skills, both active and passive, in modern language teaching. The distinction between common spoken usage and the norms of formal writing is particularly marked in German, and clear indications are given in this work as to where spoken and written usage diverge, as also in respect of forms which, although they are considered to be grammatically 'correct', are felt to be stilted outside formal writing (and sometimes even there). Similarly, forms which are frequently heard in everyday speech but widely thought of as non-standard or incorrect are included here, as the foreign learner will encounter them every day, but with a clear indication of their status. Important regional variants within standard German are also included and marked accordingly, especially those commonly found in Swiss or Austrian usage, but purely dialectal forms have been ignored. The basic intention is that a learner encountering an unfamiliar structure or feature should be able to consult the work in order to establish its status in the modern language.

Aside from the changes to the structure of the work mentioned above, the opportunity has been taken, as with all previous revisions, to check the detail of all entries and ensure that all statements about correct usage are as accurate as possible. To this end any dated or inadequate examples have been replaced and all the information about specific points of grammar and usage has been checked fully against my own database of modern German, the most recent academic research (as reflected – necessarily selectively – in the bibliography) and the extensive DeReKo corpus of spoken and written German at the Institut für Deutsche Sprache in Mannheim. This invaluable resource has grown exponentially since the preparation of the first revision – from some two million words in the early eighties to some 30 billion at the end of

2015 – and it is available online at www.ids-mannheim.de. It is naturally complemented now by the material which can be accessed through internet search engines, and these have also been used extensively – although with the appropriate degree of care, since they are not necessarily representative of widespread usage. Nevertheless, these sources can be invaluable in tracing and attesting some of the most recent developments in the language which are unlikely to find their way into conventional print media, notably demonstrating the continued vitality of the language in incorporating recent lexical material – often, although not only, from English. Thus, *die SMS* (in Austria *das SMS*) 'text message' has given a verb *simsen*, which is then adapted through the whole range of possible derivations to give *aussimsen*, *ersimsen*, *versimsen*, and many more. Information about such possibilities is given in Chapter 20.

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My debt to others in the preparation of this and previous revisions is huge, and I am immensely grateful, first, to all the native speakers of German, unfortunately too numerous to mention, who have answered questions, given advice and, often unwittingly, provided me with examples and other linguistic data. No little thanks are due, too, to generations of students in Manchester, London and Edmonton, since much of the detail in this book was assembled in an attempt to answer their questions and enquiries about German. Many friends, colleagues and acquaintances in Britain, Germany and many other countries – some, sadly, no longer with us – have also assisted me over the years in preparing this and previous editions, and I must express my thanks to all of them, notably to Prof. W. Abraham, Ms E. Adelseck, Prof. V. Ágel, Prof. J.O. Askedal, Prof. A. Auer, Dr J.S. Barbour, Ms S. Bayer, Dr C. Beedham, Dr P. Bennett, Prof. D. Brée, Dr W. Brockhaus-Grand, Dr E.-M. Broomer, Mr P.A. Coggle, Prof. P. Colliander, Dr P. Cook, Prof. M. Dalmas, Dr W.V. Davies, Mr T. Despositos, Prof. D. Dobrovolsky, Dr B. Donaldson, Dr D. Duckworth, Prof. L. Eichinger, Prof. P. Eisenberg, Prof. S. Elspaß, Prof. A. Ensslin, Prof. C. Fandrych, Dr C. Fehringer, Dr K. Fischer, Prof. J.L. Flood, Prof. A. Gardt, Prof. S. Günthner, Dr P. Gupta, Prof. C. Gutknecht, Prof. C. Hall, Mr W. Hanson, Dr G. Hens, Mr P. Holgate, Mr D.H.R. Jones, Prof. R. Jones, Prof. W.J. Jones, Ms C. Kaiser, Prof. E. Knipf-Komlósi, Prof. K.M. Kohl, Ms A. Krawanja, Prof. E. Lang, Prof. N. Langer, Prof. O. Leirbukt, Prof. E. Leiss, Mrs G. Loftus, Dr J. Manton, Dr G.D.C. Martin, Dr V. Martin, Mr D.G. McCulloch, Prof. N. McLelland, Prof. U. Meinhof, Dr M. Minden, Dr K. Neuhaus, Prof. E. Neuland, Prof. H. Ridley, Prof. J. Roche, Prof. D. Rösler, Dr S. Scheible, Ms M. Schwab, Dr A. Scott, Dr R.W. Sheppard, Prof. H.G. Siefken, Prof. P. Stevenson, Prof. G. Stickel, Dr P. Storjohann, Ms S. Tebbutt, Mrs E. Teubert, Prof. J.K.A. Thomaneck, Mrs A. Thompson, Dr B. Thompson, Prof. M.R. Townson, Mr B.A. Watson, Dr S. Watts, Prof.

H. Wegener, Dr J. West, Dr R.J. Whitt, Prof. D.N. Yeandle and Prof. G. Zifonun. However, any errors are naturally entirely the author's. Thanks are also due to the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), which has made a number of visits possible to the Institut für Deutsche Sprache (IDS) in Mannheim to consult material there and use its library facilities, as to the IDS itself and colleagues there for their unstinting support and assistance over more than thirty years. I am also immensely grateful to the publishers' editors, especially to Lesley Riddle at Edward Arnold and Hodder and latterly to Andrea Harthill at Routledge. Their continued encouragement and invaluable advice on practical details has been crucial in maintaining production quality and ensuring the success of the work.

Martin Durrell
Manchester, 2016

The phonetic alphabet

On those occasions (especially in Chapter 21) where it is necessary to indicate precise pronunciation the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association (IPA) is used. The following table gives all the IPA symbols used in this book, with examples from German, (British) English or French. Phonetic symbols are conventionally given between square brackets, e.g. *Mann*, pronounced [man]. Long vowels are indicated by the symbol : placed after the vowel sign.

Vowels

iː	Ger b*ie*ten, Engl b*ea*t
ɪ	b*i*t
eː	Ger b*i*tten, Engl b*e*t
ɛ	b*e*t
ɛː	Ger b*ä*ten, Fr sc*è*ne
a	*é*couter
aː	Ger B*a*tt, Engl F*a*ther
ɔ	b*o*d
oː	Ger w*o*hnen, Engl h*o*t
U	Ger B*u*ch, Fr p*au*
	Ger B*u*tter, Engl b*u*t
uː	Ger K*u*h, Fr tr*ou*
Y	Ger F*ü*lle
yː	Ger M*ü*hle, Fr m*ur*
œ	Ger H*ö*lle
ø	Ger H*ö*hle, Fr p*eu*
aI	Ger f*ei*n, Engl f*i*ne
aU	Ger M*au*s, Engl m*ou*se
œY	Ger M*äu*se
ə	Ger bitt*e*, Engl chin*a*
ɐ	Ger bitt*er*

b*u*tcher

Consonants

p	Ger *p*assen, Engl *p*ass
b	Ger *b*itte, Engl *b*it
t	Ger *t*un, Engl *t*on
d	Ger *d*umm, Engl *d*umb
k	Ger *k*ommen, Engl *c*ome
g	Ger *g*ut, Engl *g*ood
f	Ger *f*aul, Engl *f*oul
v	Ger *w*ann, Engl *v*an
s	Ger la*ss*en, Engl *s*at
z	Ger *s*aß, Engl *z*ero
ʃ	Ger *sch*ießen, Engl *sh*eet
x	Ger Bu*ch*, Scots lo*ch*
ç	Ger mi*ch*, Engl *H*ugh
h	Ger *h*olen, Engl *h*ole
m	Ger *m*ich, Engl *m*ine
n	Ger *n*eun, Engl *n*ine
ŋ	Ger hi*ng*, Engl hu*ng*
l	Ger *l*aut, Engl *l*oud
ʁ	Ger *r*ot
j	Ger *j*a, Engl *y*ear

Nouns

NOUNS are words which name living creatures, things, places, ideas or processes. A striking feature of German is that they are always written with an initial capital letter (see **21.2**). A noun is often preceded by an ARTICLE or other DETERMINER (see **Chapters 4** and **5**), and often also by one or more ADJECTIVES or a longer adjectival phrase (see **Chapter 6**). Together, these form the NOUN PHRASE, illustrated in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1 The noun phrase: nouns

Determiner	Adjective/adjectival phrase	Noun
die	flottes	**Gott**
ein	seit vorgestern	**Erde**
unser	vermisster	**Auto**
		Hund

In German there are **three** grammatical categories which are relevant for nouns:

- GENDER: whether the noun is MASCULINE, FEMININE or NEUTER

  (section **1.1** gives detailed information about noun gender)

- NUMBER: whether the noun is SINGULAR or PLURAL

  (section **1.2** shows how nouns form their plurals and explains some uses of the plural)

- CASE: how the noun shows its function in the sentence

(section **1.3** explains the noun endings which show ACCUSATIVE, DATIVE or GENITIVE case)

1.1 Noun gender

Every German noun belongs to one of the three genders: MASCULINE, FEMININE or NEUTER.

Grammatical GENDER is a system for classifying nouns. It is not the same as 'natural' gender (i.e. 'males', 'females' and 'things', as in English), and for this reason the names of the genders in German are rather misleading and the classification can seem arbitrary to English learners, especially as words for 'things' can have any gender:

MASCULINE: **der** Tisch FEMININE: **die** Wand NEUTER: **das** Fenster

Gender differences are only relevant in the singular of nouns in German, not the plural:

die Tische, **die** Wände, **die** Fenster

Foreign learners are usually recommended to learn German nouns together with the definite article which shows the gender: **der** Tisch, **die** Wand, **das** Fenster. This is still an ideal method, but in practice the form (especially the ending) of a noun or its meaning often gives a useful clue to its gender, as does the way the plural is formed. The gender of about 80% of German nouns can be predicted in this way, and knowing these clues (even if there are some exceptions) helps with learning and remembering the gender of nouns. This section shows first:

- How **gender** can be recognized from the **form** of a noun

  (**Tables 1.2** and **1.3** and sections **1.1.1–1.1.2**)

- How **gender** can be predicted from the **meaning** of a noun

(Table 1.4 and sections **1.1.3–1.1.6**)

The remainder of this section gives some more detailed information relating to the gender of nouns:

- **Nouns** referring to **humans** and **animals** – some **special cases** (section **1.1.7**)
- The gender of **compound words** and **abbreviations** (section **1.1.8**)
- The gender of **loan-words from English** (section **1.1.9**)
- Nouns with **varying** or **double gender** (sections **1.1.10–1.1.11**)
- Problems with **gender agreement** (section **1.1.12**)

1.1.1 Noun gender and endings

The gender of many nouns can be recognized from their form. In particular, most noun endings (especially DERIVATIONAL SUFFIXES, see section **20.2.1**) are invariably linked with a particular gender, as summarized in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Gender and endings

Masculine endings			
-ant	der Konsonant	***-ismus***	der Sozialismus
-ast	der Kontrast	***-ling***	der Schmetterling
-ich	der Teppich	***-or***	der Motor
-ig	der Honig	***-us***	der Rhythmus
Feminine endings			
*-**a***	die Pizza	***-keit***	die Herrlichkeit
-anz	die Eleganz	*-schaft*	die Herrschaft
-ei	die Bücherei	*-sion*	die Explosion
-enz	die Existenz	*-tät*	die Universität
-heit	die Krankheit	*-tion*	die Revolution
-ie	die Biologie	-ung	die Bedeutung

-ik	die Politik	***-ur***	die Natur
-in	die Freundin		
Neuter endings			
-chen	das Mädchen	***-sel***	das Rätsel
-lein	das Büchlein	***-tel***	das Viertel
-ma	das Drama	***-tum***	das Eigentum
-ment	das Appartement	***-um***	das Album

There are very few common exceptions to these rules. These are:

- for the masculine endings: *das Labor, das Genus* 'gender' , *das Tempus* 'tense'.
- for the feminine endings: *das Sofa, das Genie, der Atlantik, der Pazifik, das Mosaik, das Abitur, das Futur, das Purpur.*
- for the neuter endings: *die Firma, der Streusel, der Irrtum, der Reichtum, der Konsum*
- Chemical terms in - *in* (pronounced [i : n]) are neuter: *das Benzin, das Protein.*

1.1.2 Other clues to noun gender given by the form of the noun

The form of some other nouns gives a clue to the gender, as summarized in **Table 1.3**, and it is helpful to be aware of these, although it is often a matter of tendency rather than firm rule, and the common exceptions given in the later paragraphs in this section need to be noted.

Table 1.3 Other clues to noun gender by form

Most nouns formed from **strong verbs without a suffix** (but often with a vowel change) are **masculine**	der Betrieb, der Bruch, der Fall, der Gang, der Sprung
Most **nouns ending in *-t* from verbs** are **feminine**	die Ankunft, die Fahrt, die Flucht, die Sicht
Nouns **in *-el*, *-er* and *-en*** are	der Flügel, der Fehler,

predominantly (60%) **masculine**	der Schatten
Nouns in *-e* are mainly (90%) **feminine**	die Blume, die Bühne, die Garage, die Liebe
Nouns with the prefix *Ge-* are mainly (90%) **neuter**	das Gebäude, das Gebirge, das Gesetz, das Gespräch
Nouns with the **suffixes *-nis* and *-sal*** are mainly **neuter** (about two-thirds)	das Bedürfnis, das Ereignis, das Zeugnis, das Schicksal
Monosyllabic nouns are predominantly (60%) **masculine**	der Arm, der Fuß, der Lärm, der Punkt, der Schuh

Further details on these groups:

(a) Nouns formed from strong verbs without a suffix are masculine

These often have a change in the vowel:

> der Beginn, der Betrieb, der Biss, der Bruch, der Dreh, der Einlass, der Ersatz, der Fall, der Gang,
>
> der Griff, der Halt, der Klang, der Sprung, der Treff, der Verdruss, der Vortrag, der Wurf, der Zug

There are a few common exceptions: *das Grab, das Leid, das Maß, das Schloss, das Verbot.*

(b) Most nouns ending in *-t* from verbs are feminine

> die Ankunft, die Fahrt, die Flucht, die Gunst, die Last, die Macht, die Schlacht, die Schrift, die Sicht

Common exceptions are: *der Dienst, der Durst, der Frost, der Verdienst, der Verlust; das Gift.*

(c) Nouns in *-el*, *-en* and *-er* are predominantly masculine

i.e. 60% of those in - *el* and - *er*, but 80% of those in - *en* (as no feminine nouns end in *en*):

der Balken, der Fehler, der Flügel, der Körper, der Schatten, der Tunnel

Nouns in - *er* from verbs (see **20.2.1d**) are **masculine**: *der Bäcker, der Bohrer, der Lehrer* (in any case, many of these denote male humans). The other nouns which are not masculine fall into four groups:

(i) Nouns from verb infinitives in - **en** are neuter (see **1.1.6e**): *das Essen, das Kaffeetrinken.*
(ii) About 25% of those in - ***el*** and - **er** are feminine: *die Butter, die Regel, die Wurzel.*
(iii) Nouns in -**sel** and - *tel* are neuter (see **1.1.1**): *das Rätsel, das Viertel, das Achtel.*
(iv) Other nouns in - ***el***, - ***en*** and - ***er*** (about 15%) are neuter: *das Segel, das Zeichen, das Fieber.*

(d) Nouns in *-e* are mainly (90%) feminine

die Biene, die Blume, die Bühne, die Garage, die Gruppe, die Lerche, die Reihe, die Sahne

There are five major groups of exceptions:

(i) The 'weak' masculines which are names of male persons and animals (see **1.3.2**):

der Affe, der Bote, der Junge, der Löwe

(ii) Nine irregular masculines (see **1.3.3**):

der Buchstabe, der Friede, der Funke, der Gedanke, der Glaube, der Haufe, der Name, der Same, der Wille

(iii) Two other masculine nouns:

der Charme, der Käse

(iv) Most nouns with the prefix *Ge* - are **neuter**, even if they end in - *e* (see **1.1.2e**):

das Gebirge, das Gefälle, das Gemüse

(v) A few other neuter nouns. The most frequent are:

das Auge, das Ende, das Erbe *inheritance* (see **1.1.11**), das Finale, das Image, das Interesse, das Prestige, das Regime

(e) Most nouns with the prefix *Ge* - [gə] are neuter

Many of these end in -*e*, but in this case it is the prefix (see **20.2.2b**) which points to the gender:

das Gebäude, das Gebirge, das Gebot, das Gelübde, das Gemüse, das Gesetz, das Gespräch

There are a few exceptions, which fall into three groups:

(i) Names of male or female humans:

der Gehilfe/die Gehilfin	*assistant*
der Gemahl/die Gemahlin	spouse
(*elev.*)	comrade
der Genosse/die Genossin	*godfather*
der Gevatter (*arch.*)	

(ii) Eleven other masculines:

der Gebrauch	*use*	der Gehorsam	*obedience*	der Geschmack	*taste*
der Gedanke	*thought*	der Genuss	*enjoyment*	der Gestank	*stink*
der Gefallen	*favour*	der Geruch	*smell*	der Gewinn	*profit*
der Gehalt	*content*	der Gesang	*singing*		

Gefallen and *Gehalt* are neuter in other meanings, see **1.1.11**.

(iii) Eleven other feminines:

die Gebärde	*gesture*	die Gefahr	*danger*	die Gestalt	*figure*
die Gebühr	*fee*	die Gemeinde	*community*	die Gewähr	*guarantee*
die Geburt	*birth*	die Geschichte	*history; story*	die Gewalt	*force, violence*
die Geduld	*patience*	die Geschwulst	*tumour*		

(f) Nouns with the suffixes - *nis* and - *sal* are mainly (about two-thirds) neuter

das Bedürfnis, das Ereignis, das Ergebnis, das Erlebnis, das Gedächtnis, das Geheimnis,

das Hindernis, das Verhältnis, das Verständnis, das Zeugnis; das Scheusal, das Schicksal

About a third are feminine, e.g.:

die Besorgnis, die Erkenntnis, die Erlaubnis, die Ersparnis, die Kenntnis, die Wildnis, die Mühsal

In particular, nouns in - *nis* from adjectives are mainly feminine, e.g. die Bitternis, die Finsternis

(g) Nouns with some endings of foreign origin are mostly neuter if they refer to things

-al	das Lineal	**-at**	das Sekretariat	**-iv**	das Adjektiv
-an	das Organ	**-ent**	das Talent	**-o**	das Büro
-ar	das Formular	**-ett**	das Etikett	**-on**	das Mikrophon
-är	das Militär	**-ier**	das Papier		

Nouns with these endings referring to persons are masculine, and there are a few other common exceptions:

der Altar, der Apparat, der Automat, der Kanal, der Kanton, der Kommentar,

die Manier, die Moral, die Person, der Salat, der Senat, der Skandal

(h) Nouns of one syllable are predominantly masculine

Most of the remaining nouns of German are words of one syllable. In practice, the gender of these is best learned by heart, but it is always worth bearing in mind how these nouns are distributed between the three genders, i.e.:

- **67% masculine**, e.g. der Arm, der Lärm, der Punkt, der Schuh
- **19% neuter**, e.g. das Buch, das Dach, das Jahr, das Kinn
- **14% feminine**, e.g. die Angst, die Hand, die Nuss, die Stadt

Table 1.4 Noun gender and meaning

Masculine	
male humans and animals	**der** Arzt, **der** Hahn, **der** Löwe, **der** Bock
seasons, months, days of the week	**der** Sommer, **der** Januar, **der** Montag
winds, weather, compass points	**der** Föhn, **der** Nebel, **der** Schnee, **der** Norden
rocks, minerals	**der** Granit, **der** Diamant
alcoholic and plant-based drinks	**der** Gin, **der** Kakao
makes of car	**der** BMW, **der** Audi, **der** Mercedes
rivers outside Germany	**der** Ganges, **der** Nil, **der** Severn
monetary units	**der** Euro, **der** Dollar, **der** Franken
mountains, mountain ranges	**der** Brocken, **der** Spessart
Feminine	
female humans and animals	**die** Frau, **die** Henne, **die** Löwin, **die** Sau
aeroplanes, motorbikes, ships	**die** Boeing, **die** BMW, **die** „Bismarck"
rivers in German-speaking countries	**die** Aare, **die** Oder, **die** Spree, **die** Weser
names of numerals	**die** Eins, **die** Vier, **die** Milliarde
Neuter	
young humans and animals	**das** Baby, **das** Kind, **das** Ferkel, **das** Lamm
metals, chemicals, scientific units	**das** Gold, **das** Eisen, **das** Aspirin,
letters of the alphabet, musical	

notes	**das** Volt
other parts of speech used as nouns	**das** A, **das** Ypsilon, ein großes D, **das** hohe C
hotels, cafés, restaurants, cinemas	**das** Stehen, **das** Aber, **das** moderne Deutsch
continents, countries, towns	**das** „Hilton“, **das** „Kranzler“, **das** „Kapitol”
	das alte Europa, **das** neue Polen, **das** geteilte Berlin

1.1.3 Noun gender and meaning

There are many nouns whose gender is determined by their meaning. The most important of these regularities are summarized in **Table 1.4**, and further details are given in sections **1.1.4–1.1.6**.

In this context, it should be noted that determination of gender by form almost invariably overrides determination by meaning, so that, for example, *das Mädchen* is neuter because words with the suffix *-chen* are neuter without exception.

1.1.4 Masculine nouns by meaning

(a) Male persons and male animals (see also 1.1.7)

der Arzt, der Ingenieur, der König, der Student, der Vater, der Bock, der Eber, der Hahn

(b) Seasons, months and days of the week

der Frühling, der Sommer, der Herbst, der Januar, der Mai, der Mittwoch, der Sonnabend

However, compounds have the gender of the second element (see **1.1.8**),

e.g. *das Frühjahr*, *die Jahreszeit*.

(c) Points of the compass and words referring to winds and kinds of weather

der Norden, der Osten, der Süden, der Westen

der Föhn, der Passat, der Taifun, der Wind

der Frost, der Hagel, der Nebel, der Regen, der Schnee, der Sturm, der Tau

There are a few frequent exceptions: *die Brise, das Eis, das Wetter*.

(d) Rocks and minerals

der Diamant, der Granit, der Lehm, der Quarz, der Ton

Common exceptions: *das Erz, die Kohle, die Kreide, das Mineral*.

(e) Alcoholic and plant-based drinks

der Cocktail, der Gin, der Kirsch, der Schnaps, der Wein, der Wodka

der Kakao, der Kaffee, der Most, der Saft, der Tee

A notable exception is *das Bier*.

(f) Makes of car

der Audi, der BMW, der Citroën, der Polo, der Rolls- Royce, der Trabant

(g) Rivers outside Germany

der Ganges, der Jordan, der Kongo, der Mississippi, der Nil, der Po, der

Shannon, der Severn

However, those ending in *-a* or *-e* are usually feminine, e.g. *die Seine, die Themse, die Wolga*, as is *die Liffey*.

(h) Monetary units

der Cent, der Dollar, der Euro, der Franken, der Pfennig, der Rappen, der Schilling

There are several exceptions, notably *die Mark, das Pfund*.

(i) Mountains and mountain ranges

der Ätna, der Brocken, der Montblanc, der Mount Everest, der Säntis
der Balkan, der Harz, der Himalaja, der Jura, der Spessart, der Taunus

There are some common exceptions, notably compounds like *das Erzgebirge, das Matterhorn, die Zugspitze* as well as some others, e.g. *die Eifel, die Haardt, die Rhön, die Sierra Nevada*.

1.1.5 Feminine nouns by meaning

(a) Female persons and animals

die Frau, die Gans, die Henne, die Kuh, die Mutter, die Sau, die Tante

Notable exceptions are the archaic or derogatory *das Weib* as well as diminutives in *-chen* and *-lein* like *das Fräulein* (nowadays largely obsolete) and *das Mädchen*. The recent loan-word *das Girl* (see **1.1.9**) is probably neuter by analogy with *das Mädchen*.

(b) Aeroplanes, motorbikes and ships

die Airbus A320, die Boeing 737, die Cessna, die Tu-154

die BMW, die Honda
die „Bismarck", die „Bremen"

However, names of aeroplanes and ships often keep the gender of the base word, e.g. *der Airbus, der Storch; der „Albatros", das „Möwchen"*.

(c) Native German names of rivers

This includes many rivers in regions of Central or Eastern Europe where German has been widely spoken in the past but which are nowadays not in Germany, Austria or Switzerland.

die Donau, die Elbe, die Ems, die Fulda, die Isar, die Lahn, die Maas, die Memel, die Moldau,

die Mosel, die Neiße, die Oder, die Ruhr, die Saale, die Spree, die Weichsel, die Werra, die Weser

There are a few important exceptions: *der Inn, der Lech, der Main, der Neckar, der Rhein.*

(d) Names of numerals

die Eins, die Vier, die Tausend, die Million, die Milliarde

Note, as quantity expressions: *das Dutzend, das Hundert, das Tausend* (see **8.1.5b**).

1.1.6 Neuter nouns by meaning

(a) Young persons and animals

das Baby, das Ferkel, das Fohlen, das Junge (but see **1.1.11**), das Kalb, das

Kind, das Lamm

(b) Metals and chemical elements

das Blei, das Eisen, das Gold, das Kobalt, das Kupfer, das Messing, das Uran, das Zinn

Common exceptions: *die Bronze, der Phosphor, der Schwefel, der Stahl*, and compounds like *der Sauerstoff*.

(c) Scientific units

das Ampere, das Atom, das Elektron, das Molekül, das Pfund, das Volt, das Watt

Liter and *Meter* can be masculine *or* neuter, see **1.1.10b**.

(d) Letters of the alphabet and musical notes

das A, ein großes D, das Ypsilon

das hohe C, das Cis, das Ges

In Swiss usage letters are masculine, e.g. *der A*.

(e) Other parts of speech used as nouns

This includes, most importantly, verb infinitives (see **11.4**), e.g.:

das Benehmen, das Fussballspielen, das Inkrafttreten, das Kommen, das Zeitunglesen

as well as all other parts of speech:

das Ach, das Durcheinander, das vertraute Du, das Jenseits, sein ewiges

Nein

This group also comprises colours, languages (see also **6.2.4**), and English - *ing* forms:

das Blau des Himmels, das österreichische Deutsch, das Meeting

(f) Hotels, cafés, restaurants and cinemas

das Hilton, das „Kranzler“, das „Roxy“

(g) Names of companies with no article

In practice the gender only becomes apparent with pronouns or determiners in agreement:

Samsung weist darauf hin, dass **seine** Smart-TVs dank Spracherkennung private Gespräche mitschneiden können (*Zeit*)	*Samsung points out that its Smart TVs can record private conversations by means of language recognition software*

Less frequently, these names are used with feminine agreement, e.g. *Nokia hat* **ihre** *Umsatzprognose geändert.*

(h) Names of continents, countries, provinces, towns and cities

For the use of the article with these neuter names, see **4.4.1c**.

das gärende Afrika, das viktorianische England, das wilhelminische Deutschland,

das alte Bayern, das zerstörte Frankfurt, das historische Neustadt (*despite*: die Stadt)

There are two groups of exceptions to this rule:

(i) Several feminines, i.e.:

die Arktis, die Antarktis; die Lausitz, die Pfalz, die Schweiz

and those ending in *-a*, *-e*, *-ei* or *- ie* (except *Afrika*, *China*), e.g.:

die Riviera, die Bretagne, die Türkei, die Normandie

(ii) A few masculines (used with the definite article, see **4.4.1a**):

der Irak, der Iran, der Jemen, der Kongo, der Libanon, der Sudan

The names of these countries are also sometimes used as neuter nouns, with no article, e.g. *die beunruhigende politische Situation* **in Irak**, **das** *anscheinend im Chaos zu versinken droht*. This is now the form officially preferred by the German *Auswärtiges Amt*. However, everyday usage has so far kept to the traditional norm of masculine gender, with the article.

1.1.7 The gender of nouns for humans and animals: special cases

(a) Feminine forms of nouns denoting professions, occupations or nationality, etc.

For many names denoting professions, occupations or nationality the basic designation is masculine, and a feminine can be formed from it with the suffix *- in* (see **20.2.1f**):

der Engländer – die Engländer **in** der Türke – die Türk **in**

der Koch – die Köch **in** der Lehrer – die Lehrer **in**

or by replacing *- mann* with *- frau*, e.g.:

der Fachmann – die Fach **frau** der Geschäftsmann – die Geschäfts **frau**

These forms are used where appropriate to refer to female persons:

Sie gilt als die beste **Kundin** von unserem Geschäft	*She is considered our best customer*
Heute Abend habe ich deine **Freundin** Anna gesehen	*I saw your friend Anna this evening*

(b) Present-day usage of feminine forms

The use of feminine forms, especially those in *-in*, has given rise to much controversy and it is in practice variable and uncertain nowadays. Using undifferentiated masculine nouns, e.g. *Alle* **Studenten** *sind herzlich eingeladen* or *Alle deutschen* ***Politiker*** *haben diese Meinung geteilt* to refer to both men and women, can be considered discriminatory, although it is quite frequent and usual. In general, though, there is a clear trend nowadays to avoid gender-specification wherever possible, but the alternatives are often tricky or complex and the uncertainty has resulted in much inconsistency in practice. The most frequent modern usage can be summarized as follows:

(i) The feminine form is used if it is considered relevant in context:

Die neue Lehrer **in** scheint sehr beliebt zu sein

(*Der neue Lehrer* would be odd if the teacher is a woman)

(ii) The feminine forms are usual to refer back to a woman (or women) already mentioned:

Meine beiden Schwestern sind Ärzt **innen** (*not*: Ärzte)

Hanne Frisch, die Ärzt **in** (*not*: der Arzt), die ihn behandelt hatte

Sie wurde die erste Professor **in** an einer deutschen Universität

(iii) The masculine form is sometimes used in a general sense to refer to either sex, especially with titles and 'newer' professions (i.e. those which were previously predominantly or exclusively male), or when the profession itself is emphasized, e.g.:

Sie ist Ingenieur, Autoschlosser, Informatiker

der damalige Minister für Volksbildung Margot Honecker

Frau Professor Dr. Hartmann

This usage is particularly common after the verb *sein*, and it was predominant in the former GDR. However, the use of the feminine suffix is becoming more usual with titles. On the election of Angela Merkel as Federal Chancellor, it was established (after some debate) that the official form of address for her would be *Frau Bundeskanzlerin*.

(iv) The feminine form is the norm if *Frau* is omitted, e.g.:

Bundespräsidentin der Schweiz Doris Leuthard

Ute Hartmann ist **Professorin** für Neuere Deutsche Literatur

(v) In advertisements for jobs, both forms are usually given, often in abbreviated form:

Wir suchen ab sofort **eine(n) Musiklehrer(in)**	*We have an immediate vacancy for a music teacher*
Wir brauchen **eine/n Mitarbeiter/-in** für Gemeinde- und Jugendarbeit	*We require an employee for social and youth work*

(vi) When no feminine form is available, the masculine must be used despite the anomaly:

der Säugling hieß Anna

der Teenager war schwanger

unser werter Gast, Frau Dr. Schilling

(vii) In written German, the feminine form in - *in* is sometimes used to refer back to feminine nouns denoting things:

Die ehemalige Sowjetunion war die größte Produzent **in** von Personenwagen im Ostblock	*The former Soviet Union was the largest producer of private cars in the Eastern bloc*

This usage is not obligatory, and the masculine form (e.g. *der größte Produzent*) would be equally acceptable in standard German.

(viii) In the plural, to refer to both men and women, various possibilities are current. It is quite usual for the masculine form to be used:

Der Bürgermeister begrüßte **die Besucher** aus der Hauptstadt Wien

Wir haben die neuen **Nachbarn** noch nicht kennen gelernt

Astrid und Christian sind unsere besten **Freunde**

However, this may be considered discriminatory in certain contexts, especially if the feminine form is in common usage, and both forms are then often given:

liebe Zuschauer und Zuschauerinnen; die Studenten und Studentinnen dieser Universität

(ix) A recent option in writing is to use the feminine form with a capital *I* (sometimes spoken as long [i:]) to indicate both sexes, although many authorities do not consider this to be standard:

die **StudentInnen** der Westfälischen Wilhelmsuniversität Münster

Although this form is most frequently used in the plural, the singular, e.g. *Student **In***, does occur. However, as there is then uncertainty whether it should be used with *der* or *die*, it tends to be limited to contexts where no article is required, e.g. *Als*

StudentIn hatte ich selten genug Geld.

(x) In some cases, the problem can be avoided by using a word which is not gender-specific, if one is available, especially from present participles (see **11.5.1b**), e.g. *die Studierenden der Universität Passau*. These are largely restricted to official writing, where they have become quite frequent, but they are rarely used in everyday speech and innovations like *Zu Fuß Gehende* or *Rad Fahrende* are felt by many to be stilted and awkward. However, some non-gender-specific forms are coming into use in colloquial speech, especially abbreviations like *die Studis* 'students'.

(c) Animals

The names of species of animals can be masculine, feminine or neuter, e.g.:

der Dachs, **die** Ratte, **das** Pferd

Many familiar or domesticated animals have distinct masculine and feminine forms:

der Fuchs – **die** Füchsin **der** Gänserich – **die** Gans

der Hahn – **die** Henne **der** Kater – **die** Katze

Usually, one of these designates the species, e.g. ***der*** *Fuchs,* ***die*** *Gans,* ***die*** *Katze* (but note ***das*** *Huhn*) and the other is only used if the sex is known or relevant in context. In the absence of a specific term, male or female animals and birds can be indicated by *das Männchen* or *das Weibchen*, e.g.:

das Zebra **männchen** das Frosch **weibchen**

(d) Anomalous genders of names of human beings

The gender of the following nouns is fixed and used to refer to both men and women:

die Geisel *hostage*	das Mannequin *mannequin*	das Mündel *ward*
das Genie *genius*	die Memme *sissy*	die Person *person*
das Haupt *head* (of state, family)	der Mensch *human being*	die Wache *sentry*
das Individuum *individual*	das Mitglied *member*	die Waise *orphan*

Exceptionally, in legal language ***der*** Mündel is usual, see **1.1.10**, and the gender is different in the phrase *jdn.* **zum** *Waisen machen* 'to make sb. an orphan'.

In addition, all words in *-ling* are masculine and those in *-chen* and *-lein* are neuter, irrespective of natural gender (see **1.1.1**), e.g. *der Flüchtling, der Zwilling*; *das Söhnchen, das Fräulein, das Mädchen.*

Problems of agreement if grammatical and natural gender are in conflict are dealt with in **1.1.12**.

1.1.8 The gender of compound words and abbreviations

(a) Compound nouns usually have the gender of the last component

der Fahr **plan** **die** Bushalte **stelle** **das** Hallen **bad**

There are a few exceptions to this rule:

(i) Some compounds of *der Mut* are feminine:

die Anmut, die Armut, die Demut, die Großmut, die Langmut, die Sanftmut, die Schwermut, die Wehmut

(ii) For the compounds of *der/das Teil*, see 1.1.10c.

Others:

das Gift	*but* die Mitgift	die Woche	*but* der
der Grat	*dowry*	das Wort	Mittwoch
die Scheu	*but* das		*but* die Antwort
	Rückgrat		
	but der Abscheu		
	(see **1.1.10a**)		

(b) The gender of abbreviations is determined by the base word

der HSV (der Hamburger Sportverein)

die CDU (die Christlich-Demokratische Union)
das BAFöG (das Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz)

(c) Shortened words have the gender of the full form

der Akku (Akkumulator)	die Lok (Lokomotive)
der Krimi (Kriminalroman)	die Uni (Universität)
das Labor (Laboratorium)	

A common exception is *das Foto*, despite *die Fotografie* (but *die Foto* is usual in Switzerland).

1.1.9 The gender of English loan-words

Large-scale borrowing of words from English is a feature of modern German, and the nouns have to be allocated a gender. This tends to be determined by the following principles (which sometimes conflict, resulting in uncertainty and variation):

(a) Many English words adopt the gender of the nearest German equivalent

der Airbag (der Sack)	die Box (die Büchse)
der Airport (der Flughafen)	die Crew (die Mannschaft)
das Baby (das Kind)	das Girl (das Mädchen)
die Band (die Kapelle)	der Lift (der Aufzug)
das Bike (das Fahrrad)	der Smog (der Nebel)
der Bob (der Schlitten)	der Shop (der Laden)

This principle also applies with pseudo-loans like *das Handy* (by analogy with *das Telefon*). It can sometimes result in a word having two genders in different meanings, e.g. *der Service* 'service' (by analogy with *der Dienst*); *das Service* '(dinner/tea) service' (by analogy with *das Geschirr*).

Following similar principles the gender may also be determined by analogy with the gender of the general term in German, e.g.:

das Hockey, das Rugby, das Tennis (cf ***das*** *Spiel*)

der Jive, der Rap, der Techno (cf ***der*** *Tanz*)

(b) The ending or the form of some English words can determine the gender

(i) Words with endings similar to German endings often adopt the gender associated with that ending:

der Beamer, der Container, der Computer, der Oldtimer (- *er* is a masculine ending)

der Konduktor, der Monitor, der Rotor (- *or* is a masculine ending)

die Animation, die Supervision (- *sion* and - *tion* are feminine endings)

die Cleverness, die Fairness, die Wellness (nouns in *-nis* from adjectives are usually feminine)

die City, die Lobby, die Publicity, die Party, die Story (- *ie* is a feminine ending)

(However, some newer loans in - *ie* or - *y* tend to be neuter, e.g. *das Selfie, das Smiley*)

das Klosett, das Pamphlet, das Ticket (- *ett* is a neuter ending)

das Advertisement, das Realignment, das Treatment (- *ment* is a neuter ending)

(ii) Monosyllabic nouns from verbs are often masculine (see 1.1.2a):

der Boom, der Crash, der Deal, der Drink, der Hit, der Hype, der Link, der Look, der Rock

(iii) Nouns from English - *ing* forms are neuter (see 1.1.6e):

das Aquaplaning, das Meeting, das Online-Banking, das Training, das Walking

(iv) Words which are shortened from a longer compound can take the gender of the missing part:

das Au-Pair (-mädchen), die Holding (-company/-gesellschaft), der Intercity (-zug)

Words like these can look like exceptions, as words in '-ing' are normally neuter and *die City* is feminine.

(v) Nouns from prefixed or phrasal verbs can be either maculine or neuter (and several vary):

der Check-up, der Countdown, der Download, der Fallout, der Input, der Knockout, der Take-off

das Blow-up, das Check-in, das Handout, das Hashtag, das Research, das Teach-in, das Upgrade

(c) If there is no other indication, monosyllabic nouns are predominantly masculine

der Chip, der Lunch, der Sex, der Spot, der Trend, der Tweet

However, there are a number of frequent feminines and neuters, e.g.:

die Bar, die Couch, die Farm das Quiz, das Steak, das Team

(d) In many cases no gender has yet become firmly established

Some common examples:

die/das App	der/das Cartoon	der/die Forehand	der/das Poster
der/das Blackout	die/das Cola	der/das Ketchup	der/das Radar
der/das Blog	der/das Event	der/das Laptop	der/das Spam
der/das Break	die/das Flipchart	der/das Movie	der/das Tablet

Sometimes different German countries or regions have a preference for different genders, so that *Match* is *das Match* in Germany and Austria, but *der Match* in Switzerland. *Die E-Mail* (or often simply *die Mail*) is usual in most of Germany (presumably because of *die Post*) but *das (E-)Mail* is common in Switzerland, Austria and much of South Germany.

1.1.10 Nouns with varying gender

The gender of a few nouns is not fixed, although the variation is often linked to regional or register differences.

(a) Some common examples

Abscheu	**der** (*occ.* **die**)	Knäuel *ball*	**der** *or* **das**

abhorrence **das** (*Au.* **der**)
Backbord *port side* **der** (*S.Ger./Au.* **das**)
Barock *Baroque* **das**)
Bonbon *sweet* **der** (*occ.* **das**)
Dotter *yolk* **der** (*occ.* **das**, *obs.* **die**)
Dschungel *jungle* **der** (*occ.* **das**)
Fakt *fact* **der** (*occ.* **das**)
Filter *filter* **der** (*esp. techn.* **das**)
Foto *photo* **das** (*Sw.* **die**)
Gelee *jelly* **das** *or* **der**
Gischt *spray* **die** (*esp. techn.* **der**)
Gulasch *goulash* **der** *or* (*esp. Au.*) **das**
Joghurt *yoghurt* **der** *or* **das** (*rare* **die)**
Katapult *catapult* **das** *or* **der**
Kehricht *sweepings* **der** *or* **das**
Keks *biscuit* **der** (*Au.* **das**)
(wool) **der** (*esp. tech.* **das**)
Meteor *meteor* **das** (*legal* **der**)
Mündel *ward* **die** *or* **das**
Nutella *nutella®* **der** *or* **das**
Pesto *pesto* **der** (*Au.* **das**)
Puff *brothel* (*vulg.*) **der** (*Au./Sw.* **das**)
Pyjama *pyjamas* **das** (*S.Ger.* **der**)
Radio *radio* **der** *or* (*esp. Au.*) **das**
Sakko *jacket* **der** *or* **das**
Sims *(window-) sill, mantelpiece* **das** (*Au.* **der**)
Steuerbord *starboard* **das** (*Sw.* **der**)
Taxi *taxi* (NB: *also common*: Tüpfel *dot* (on *i*) **die** *Taxe*)
Virus *virus* **der** (*esp. Au.* **das**)
der (*medic.* **das**)

(b) *Liter* and *Meter*

Both these words (and their compounds, e.g. *Zentimeter*) are officially neuter, notably in scientific terminology, i.e. *das Liter*, *das Meter*. However, they are regularly masculine in everyday speech, and not infrequently in print, i.e. *der Liter*, *der Meter*. Written Swiss usage **always** prefers the masculine.

(c) *Teil*

Teil is most often masculine, *der Teil*, in all meanings:

dies **er** Teil von Deutschland; er behielt **den** größten Teil für sich

However, it may be neuter in a few set phrases:

ich für **mein** (*or* **meinen**) Teil; **das bessere** (*or* **den besseren**) Teil wählen;

sie trug **ihr** (*or* **ihren**) Teil dazu bei; er hat **sein** (*or* **seinen**) Teil getan

The neuter *das Teil* is also usual in technical language, to refer to a detached part:

jedes einzelne Teil, ein defektes Teil

Compounds of *Teil* are mostly masculine, e.g. *der Elternteil*, *der Körperteil*, with the following exceptions:

das Abteil *compartment*
das Einzelteil *separate part*
das (*legal* der) Erbteil *inheritance*
das Ersatzteil *replacement part*
das Gegenteil *opposite*
das/der Oberteil *upper part*
das Urteil *verdict*

1.1.11 Two genders with different meanings

A number of words have two meanings differentiated by gender:

der Band (¨e) *volume, book*
die Band (-s) (*pron.* [bɛnt]) *band, (pop) group*
der Bulle (-n, -n) *bull*; *cop* (coll.)
der Bund (¨e) *union*; *waistband*
der Ekel (*no pl.*) *disgust*
der Erbe (-n, -n) *heir*
der Flur (-e) *entrance hall* (N.G.)
der Gefallen (-) *favour*
der Gehalt (-e) *content*
der Golf (-e) *gulf*
der Gummi (-s) *eraser*
der Harz *Harz (mountains)*
das Band (¨e) *ribbon, tape*
das Band (-e) *bond*, *fetter* (see **1.2.6**)
die Bulle (-n) *(papal) bull*
das Bund (-e) *bundle*, *bunch*
das Ekel (-) (*coll.*) *nasty person*
das Erbe (*no pl.*) *inheritance*, *heritage*
die Flur (-en) *meadow* (elev.)
das Gefallen (*no pl.*) *pleasure*
das Gehalt (¨e) *salary*
das Golf (*no pl.*) *golf*
das Gummi (*no pl.*) *rubber (as material); rubber band*

der Heide (-n, -n) *heathen*
der Hut (¨e) *hat*
der Junge (-n, -n) *boy*
der Kiefer (-) *jaw*
der Kunde (-n, -n) *customer*
der Lama (-s) *lama*
der Laster (-) *lorry* (coll.)
der Leiter (-) *leader*
der Mangel (¨) *lack*
die Mark (-) *mark* (coin)
die Marsch (-en) *fen, marsh*
die Maß (-) *litre of beer* (Bav., Austr.)
der Mensch (-en, -en) *human being*
der Messer (-) *surveyor*; *gauge*
der Militär (-s) *military man*
der Moment (-e) *moment*
der Otter (-) *otter* (also: *der Fischotter*)
der Pack (-e *or* ¨e) *package*
der Pony (*no pl.*) *fringe (of hair)*
der Schild (-e) *shield*
der See (-n) *lake*
die Steuer (-n) *tax*
der Stift (-e) *pen*, *stripling* (coll.)
der Tau (*no pl.*) *dew*
der Tor (-en, -en) *fool* (lit.)
der Verdienst (*no pl.*) *earnings*
die Wehr (*no pl.*) *defence*

das Harz (*no pl.*) *resin*
die Heide (-n) *heath*
die Hut (*no pl.*) *guard* (e.g. *auf der Hut sein* 'to be on one's guard')
das Junge (adj.) *young (of animals)*
die Kiefer (-n) *pine*
die Kunde (*no pl.*) *knowledge*, *news* (elev.)
das Lama (-s) *llama*
das Laster (-) *vice*
die Leiter (-n) *ladder*
die Mangel (-n) *mangle*
das Mark (*no pl.*) *marrow (bone)*
der Marsch (¨e) *march*
das Maß (-e) *measure*
das Mensch (-er) *slut* (coll., pej.)
das Messer (-) *knife*
das Militär (*no pl.*) *the military*
das Moment (-e) *(determining) factor*
die Otter (-n) *adder* (also: *die Kreuzotter*)
das Pack (*no pl.*) *mob*, *rabble*
das Pony (-s) *pony*
das Schild (-er) *sign*, *plate*
die See (*no pl.*) *sea*
das Steuer (-) *steering-wheel*, *helm*
das Stift (-e) *foundation*, *home (e.g. for aged)*
das Tau (-e) *rope*, *hawser*
das Tor (-e) *gate*
das Verdienst (-e) *merit*, *achievement*
das Wehr (-e) *weir*

(i) In Austria, *der Gehalt* is also used in the meaning 'salary'.
(ii) In colloquial speech, *das Gummi* is used in the meaning

'eraser'.

1.1.12 Problems of gender agreement

Difficulty with gender agreement arises most often when grammatical gender and natural gender do not correspond, as in the nouns dealt with in **1.1.7**.

(a) Pronouns agree with the grammatical gender of the noun, irrespective of natural gender

This is the accepted rule, especially in formal writing:

ein **es** der Mitglieder dieses Vereins	*one of the members of this club*
Wir suchen eine männliche Fachkraft. **Sie** muss im Besitz eines Führerscheins sein	We are looking for a skilled male worker. He must have a clean driving licence
Ich kann mich jedoch an keine Person erinnern, **die** in dem so benannten Vorort wohnte (*Grass*)	However, I cannot remember any person who lived in the suburb of that name
Es war einmal ein Mädchen aus Alaska, **das** war Sängerin in einem Club in San Diego. Vor drei Jahren, mit 19, nahm **es seine** erste CD auf (*Kurier*)	*There was once a girl from Alaska, she was a singer in a club in San Diego. Three years ago, at the age of 19, she recorded her first CD*

This rule is rarely adhered to consistently. In practice, the relative pronoun almost always agrees for grammatical gender, but personal pronouns often have the form appropriate to the natural gender of the person referred to (i.e. *sie* or *er*), especially in spoken German:

Sie stürzten sich auf das Mädchen, **das** in der Ecke stand, und drohten **ihr** mit Erschießen (*Quick*)	*They rushed upon the girl standing in the corner and threatened to shoot her*
Das Mädchen da drüben? **Sie** hat	*That girl over there? But she's got*

doch rotes Haar!	*red hair!*

Even in writing, natural gender tends to predominate if the pronoun is some distance from the noun it refers to, especially if it is in a different clause or sentence:

Das Mädchen aus Köln ist gestern Abend angekommen. **Sie** ist sehr liebenswürdig	*The girl from Cologne arrived last night. She's very kind*

However, there seems to be a clear tendency to prefer the neuter pronoun to refer to younger girls.

Fräulein (if it is still used) is treated in the same way, i.e. as a neuter noun, when it is used on its own, e.g. *das Fräulein,* ***das*** *ihn bediente.* However, when followed by a name, feminine pronouns are used: *Fräulein Müller,* ***die*** *mich gestern bediente.*

(b) Neuter singular pronouns are used to refer to male and female persons

Sie stehen eine Weile schweigend, **jedes** die Hand auf der Schulter des anderen (*Fallada*)	*They stand silent for a while, each with their hand on the other's shoulder*
Bitte **alles** austeigen	*Everyone please get out*

(c) Adjectives and determiners always agree for grammatical gender

ein jung **es** Mädchen, **das** unartig **e** Bübchen, ein **e** männlich **e** Person

This also applies with *Fräulein* followed by a name, for instance at the start of a letter: *Liebes Fräulein Müller* (although, in practice, the address *Fräulein* is nowadays obsolete). Adjectives and determiners also agree with neuter names in *- chen*, e.g. *das kleine Karlchen, das fleißige Lieschen.*

1.2 Noun plurals

In English, most nouns simply add *-s* to form the plural. There is no similar general rule in German, where there are **seven** regular ways of making a noun plural, as shown in **Table 1.5**.

Table 1.5 The plural of German nouns

Plural formation	Singular	Plural
no ending (-)	der Lehrer das Segel	die Lehrer die Segel
no ending, with *Umlaut* (¨)	der Vogel der Bruder	die Vögel die Brüder
add *-e* (-e)	der Arm das Jahr	die Arme die Jahre
add *-e*, with *Umlaut* (¨e)	der Stuhl die Hand	die Stühle die Hände
add *-er*, with *Umlaut* if possible (*-er*)/(¨er)	das Tal das Kind	die Täler die Kinder
add *-n* or *-en* (*-n*)/(*-en*)	die Frau die Wiese	die Frauen die Wiesen
add *-s* (*-s*)	der Streik das Auto	die Streiks die Autos

The traditional recommendation is for foreign learners to learn the plural of each noun together with the noun and its gender, e.g.:

der Stuhl ~ die Stühle die Wiese ~ die Wiesen das Jahr ~ die Jahre

However, there are some clear links between the gender of a noun and how it forms its plural, and these are shown in **Table 1.6**.

Table 1.6 Noun plurals and gender

Plural formation	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
no ending (-)	most ending in	NONE	nouns in *-el*, *-en*,

	-el, *-en*, *-er*		*-er*, or *-chen* and *-lein*, and nouns in *Ge...e*
no ending, with *Umlaut* (¨)	about **20** ending in *-el*, *-en*, *-er*	TWO: ***Mutter***, ***Tochter***	TWO: ***Kloster***, ***Wasser***
add *-e*, without *Umlaut* (*-e*)	MOST	those in ***-nis*** and ***-sal***	MOST
add *-e*, with *Umlaut* (¨e)	many **monosyllables**	about **30**	ONE: ***Floß***
add *-er*, if possible, with Umlaut (-er)/(¨e)	about **12**	NONE	many **monosyllables**
add *-n* or *-en* (-n)/(-en)	all in *-e* (and a few others)	MOST	about **12**
add *-s*	many **foreign words**		

In practice, it is worth being aware that the plural of about 75% of German nouns is formed according to the following rules:

- **Masculine** and **neuter** nouns in - ***el***, - ***en***, - ***er*** have no ending
- Other **masculine** nouns add - ***e*** with *Umlaut*
- Other **neuter** nouns add - ***e*** without *Umlaut*
- **Feminine** nouns add - *(e)n*

However, that still leaves about a quarter of nouns which do not follow these rules, and as many of these are frequent, the advice to learn the plural separately with each noun is still valid – and applies especially to those nouns whose plurals are an exception to these basic rules. The following sections give systematic lists of these.

This section gives details on all aspects of the formation and use of

noun plurals in German:

- The **regular plural** of **masculine**, **feminine** and **neuter** nouns (sections **1.2.1–1.2.3**)
- The **plural ending** - ***s*** (section **1.2.4**)
- **Unusual plurals** (section **1.2.5**)
- Words with **two plurals** with **different meanings** (section **1.2.6**)
- **Differences between English and German** in the use of the plural (section **1.2.7**)
- The use of the plural with nouns of **weight**, **measurement and value** (section **1.2.8**)

1.2.1 The plural of masculine nouns

(a) Most masculine nouns have a plural in - *e* or ¨*e*

der Arm – die Arme	der Bart – die Bärte
der Hund – die Hunde	der Bock – die Böcke
der Punkt – die Punkte	der Fuß – die Füße
der Versuch – die Versuche	der Stuhl – die Stühle

About three-quarters of the most frequently used masculine nouns have *Umlaut* in the plural if possible. However, there are many common masculine nouns which have a plural in *-e* without *Umlaut* even though the vowel could have *Umlaut*, especially the following:

der Aal	*eel*	der Huf	*hoof*	der Schluck	*gulp*
der Arm	*arm*	der Hund	*dog*	der Schuh	*shoe*
der Beruf	*profession*	der Lachs	*salmon*	der Star	*starling*
der Besuch	*visit*	der Laut	*sound*	der Stoff	*material*
der Dolch	*dagger*	der Monat	*month*	der Tag	*day*
der Dom	*cathedral*	der Mond	*moon*	der Takt	*beat (music)*
der Druck	*pressures*	der Ort	*place*	der Thron	*throne*
der Erfolg	*success*	der Pfad	*path*	der Verlag	*publishing house*
der Grad	*degree*	der Punkt	*point*	der Verlust	*loss*
der Gurt	*belt*	der Ruf	*call*	der Versuch	*attempt*

Most nouns ending in stressed - *al*, - *an*, - *ar*, - *on* and - *or* also have the plural ending *-e*, without *Umlaut*:

der Bibliothekar – die Bibiothekare der Major – die Majore

However, the following do have *Umlaut* in the plural:

der Altar – die Altäre *altar* der Kardinal – die Kardinäle *cardinal*

der Kanal – die Kanäle *canal* der Tenor – die Tenöre *tenor*

There are a few further irregularities and exceptional cases:

(i) *der Admiral* and *der General* can have either ¨*e* or -*e* in the plural, e.g. *die Generale* or *die Generäle*.
(ii) *der Rest* has the standard plural -*e*, but -*e* **r** is frequent in informal registers.
(iii) *der Erlass* has a plural in -*e*, i.e. *die Erlasse*, in Germany, but ¨**e**, i.e. *die Erlässe*, in Austria.
(iv) The plural of *der Saal* is *die Säle*, see **21.4.2b**.

(b) Most masculine nouns ending in -*el*, -*en* or -*er* form their plural without an ending

der Onkel – die Onkel der Bäcker – die Bäcker
der Haken – die Haken der Computer – die Computer

Exeptions to this rule are the words which have no ending, but with *Umlaut* of the stressed vowel (see **1.2.1c**) and the following (see also **1.2.1e**):

der Bauer (-n, -n) *farmer*, *peasant* der Pantoffel (-n) *slipper*
der Bayer (-n, -n) *Bavarian* der Stachel (-n) *thorn*; *sting*
der Charakter (-e) *character* der Vetter (-n) *cousin*
der Muskel (-n) *muscle*

(c) About twenty masculine nouns ending in -*el*, -*en* or

- *er* form their plural with no ending, but with *Umlaut* of the stressed vowel

der Apfel – die Äpfel der Vater – die Väter

These are:

der Acker	*field*	der Magen	*stomach*
der Apfel	apple	der Mangel	lack
der Boden	floor	der Mantel	coat
der Bruder	brother	der Ofen	stove
der Faden	thread	der Sattel	saddle
der Garten	garden	der Schaden	damage
der Graben	ditch	der Schnabel	beak
der Hafen	harbour	der Schwager	brother-in-law
der Hammer	hammer	der Vater	father
der Kasten	box	der Vogel	*bird*
der Laden	*shop*; *shutter*		

There are a few further irregularities and exceptional cases:

(i) *der Laden* may be used without *Umlaut* in the plural in North Germany, e.g. *die Laden*, but only in the meaning 'shutter'.
(ii) In South Germany *der Bogen*, *der Kragen* and *der Wagen* can also form the plural with *Umlaut*, especially in speech, e.g. *die Bögen*, *die Krägen*, *die Wägen*, and these forms are regularly used in writing in Austria and Switzerland. The compound *der Ell(en)bogen* always forms the plural without *Umlaut*.

(d) About a dozen masculines have a plural in *¨er* /- *er*

der Geist – die Geister der Mann – die Männer der Wald – die Wälder

The vowel takes *Umlaut* if possible. These are:

der Bösewicht	*villain*	der Rand	*edge*
der Geist	spirit	der Reichtum	wealth

der Gott	god	der Ski	ski
der Irrtum	error	der Strauch	shrub
der Leib	body	der Wald	forest
der Mann	man	der Wiking	viking
der Mund	*mouth*	der Wurm	*worm*

For the plural of compounds in *-mann*, see **(f)** below.

(e) Some masculine nouns have the plural - *en* /- *n*

(For the use of - *n* or *-en*, see **1.2.2a**). These fall into three groups, depending on the inflection of the singular:

(i) The so-called 'weak' masculines (see **1.3.2**) which have - *(e)n* in the accusative, genitive and dative singular as well as in the plural, e.g:

der Affe – die Affen	der Mensch – die Menschen
der Bär – die Bären	der Student – die Studenten

(ii) Some irregular masculines (see **1.3.3**). The following occur in the plural:

der Buchstabe	*letter* (*of*	der Gedanke	*thought*
der Friede	*alphabet*)	der Name	name
der Funke	*peace*	der Same	*seed*
	spark		

(iii) A few other masculines with the regular ending - *(e)s* in the genitive singular:

der Dorn	*thorn*	der Schmerz	*pain*
der Fasan	pheasant	der See	*lake*
der Fleck	spot	der Staat	*state*
der Lorbeer	laurel	der Stachel	*prickle*
der Mast	mast	der Strahl	*ray*
der Muskel	muscle	der Typ	*type; bloke, guy*

der Nerv	nerve	der Untertan	subject
der Pantoffel	slipper	der Vetter	cousin
der Pfau	*peacock*	der Zeh	*toe*

Words in unstressed - *on* and - *or* also belong to this group, with a plural in -*en*, but the stress moves in the plural, see **21.1.6d**:

der ´Dämon – die Dä´monen der Pro´fessor – die Profes´soren

There are a few irregularities and exceptional cases:

(i) *der Bau* 'building' and *der Sporn* 'spur' have the irregular plurals *die Bauten* and *die Sporen*.
(ii) *die Seen* is pronounced *See-en* [ze:ə n], see **21.4.2a**.
(iii) *der Fleck* has an alternative singular form *der Flecken*.
(iv) *der Zeh* has the alternative (mainly North German) singular *die Zehe*.
(v) In the meaning 'bloke', 'guy' *der Typ* may have 'weak' singular forms, e.g. *dem Typen*, in colloquial speech, see **1.3.2c**.
(vi) The plural *die Pastöre* from *der Pastor* is frequent in North Germany.

(f) The plural of nouns in - *mann*

Compounds of - *mann* usually replace this by - *leute* in the plural when they refer to the occupation as such or to the group as a whole:

der Fachmann – die Fachleute der Kaufmann – die Kaufleute

In cases where we think more in terms of individuals than a group, or where we are not dealing with persons, the plural is formed with - *männer*, e.g.:

die Ehrenmänner, Froschmänner, Schneemänner, Staatsmänner

With some nouns both are used:

die Feuerwehrleute/-männer die Kameraleute/-männer

There is a difference between these since plurals in - *männer* are normally taken to refer to a set of male individuals, whereas those in - *leute* can be used to refer to a collection of people which may include females (for which there is a distinct singular form in - *frau*, e.g. *die Fachfrau*). A similar distinction applies with the following, where the forms in - *leute* typically denote groups including females:

die Ehemänner *husbands*, *but* die Eheleute *married couples* (i.e. *Ehemänner + Ehefrauen*)

die Seemänner *seamen* (as individuals), *but* die Seeleute *seafaring folk* (general)

1.2.2 The plural of feminine nouns

(a) Over 90% of all feminine nouns have the plural - *en* /- *n*

The ending - *n* is used with nouns ending in - *e*, - *el* or - *er*, and - *en* with other nouns:

die Arbeit – die Arbeiten die Regel – die Regeln
die Last – die Lasten die Wiese – die Wiesen

Nouns in - *in* double the final *n* in the plural, e.g. *die Studentin – die Studentinnen*

Exceptionally, *die Werkstatt* has an irregular plural with the suffix - *en* **and** *Umlaut*: *die Werkstätten*.

(b) About a quarter of feminine monosyllables have a plural in ¨*e*

die Hand – die Hände die Nuss – die Nüsse

The following are the most common. Note that over half end in *-t*:

die Angst	*fear*	die Haut	*skin*	die Nacht	*night*
die Axt	*axe*	die Kraft	*strength*	die Naht	*seam*
die Bank	*bench*	die Kuh	*cow*	die Not	*need, distress*
die Braut	*fiancée*	die Kunst	*art*	die Nuss	*nut*
die Brust	*breast*	die Laus	*louse*	die Sau	*sow*
die Faust	*fist*	die Luft	*air; breeze*	die Schnur	*string*
die Frucht	*fruit*	die Lust	*desire*	die Stadt	*town, city*
die Gans	*goose*	die Macht	*power*	die Wand	*wall*
die Gruft	*vault, tomb*	die Magd	*maid*	die Wurst	*sausage*
die Hand	*hand*	die Maus	*mouse*	die Zunft	*guild*

Compounds of - *brunst*, - *flucht* and - *kunft* also have a plural in ¨ *e*:

die Feuersbrunst – die Feuersbrünste die Auskunft – die Auskünfte

die Ausflucht – die Ausflüchte

die Sau and *die Schnur* can have the plural ending - *en* in technical registers.

(c) Feminine nouns in - *nis* and - *sal* have the plural - *e*

In practice few of these nouns are used in the plural. Those in - *nis* double the final *s*:

die Kenntnis – die Kenntnisse die Mühsal – die Mühsale

(d) Two feminine nouns have a plural with *Umlaut* and no ending (¨)

die Mutter – die Mütter (see **1.2.6**) die Tochter – die Töchter

1.2.3 The plural of neuter nouns

(a) About three quarters of neuter nouns have the plural *- e*

This group includes most neuters of more than one syllable, especially foreign words.

das Bein – die Beine	das Schaf – die Schafe
das Gefäß – die Gefäße	das Ventil – die Ventile
das Jahr – die Jahre	das Verbot – die Verbote

Nouns ending in *- nis* double the consonant in the plural: *das Zeugnis – die Zeugnisse*.

Note that *das Knie* and *das Regime* belong to this group, with the plurals *die Knie*, pronounced *Knie-e* [kni: ə] (see **21.4.2a**) and *die Regime*, pronounced [rɛʒi: mə].

(b) About a quarter of neuter nouns have the plural *¨er /- er*

Umlaut is used if possible. The majority are monosyllabic, e.g.:

das Blatt – die Blätter	das Kind – die Kinder
das Dorf – die Dörfer	das Tal – die Täler

A few neuter nouns of more than one syllable also have this ending. The following are common:

das Denkmal *monument*	das Gesicht *face*
das Gehalt *salary*	das Gespenst *ghost*
das Gemach *chamber* (elev.)	das Regiment *regiment*
das Gemüt *mood*	das Spital *hospice*
das Geschlecht *sex*	

In addition, all nouns in *- tum* take this plural, e.g. *das Altertum – die Altertümer*.

There are a few irregularities and exceptional cases:

(i) *das Denkmal* also occurs in the alternative plural form *die Denkmale*, but this is less frequent than *die Denkmäler*.
(ii) *das Ross* 'steed' (usual plural *die Rosse*) often has the plural *¨er*, i.e. *die Rösser*, in Austria and Bavaria, where it is the everyday word for 'horse'.
(iii) A few words are used colloquially with a plural form in *- er* / *¨er* in a derogatory or facetious sense, e.g. *die Dinger* (see **1.2.6**) *, die Scheusäler*.

(c) Neuter nouns ending in *- el*, *- en*, *- er*, diminutives in *- chen* and *- lein* and words in *Ge...e* have no ending in the plural (-)

das Segel – die Segel	das Mädchen – die Mädchen
das Kissen – die Kissen	das Büchlein – die Büchlein
das Messer – die Messer	das Gebäude – die Gebäude

The only exceptions are the nouns dealt with in **1.2.3d** below.

(d) Two neuter nouns have plurals in (¨)

das Kloster – die Klöster das Wasser – die Wässer

The plural *die Wässer* is used for types or sorts of water (e.g. mineral waters). To refer to masses of water the alternative plural, without *Umlaut*, i.e. *die Wasser* is used, see **1.2.6**. Compounds of *Wasser*, e.g. *das Abwasser* 'sewage' always have a plural with *Umlaut*, i.e. *die Abwässer*.

(e) A few neuter nouns have the plural *- en* /- *n*

das Auge – die Augen	das Hemd – die Hemden

The following are the most frequent:

das Auge	*eye*	das Hemd	*shirt*	das Juwel	*jewel*
das Bett	*bed*	das Herz	*heart*	das Ohr	*ear*
das Ende	*end*	das Insekt	*insect*	das Statut	*statute*
das Fakt	*fact*	das Interesse	*interest*	das Verb	*verb*

Scientific terms in *- on* also have the plural *- en*, but the stress shifts in the plural: *das E´ lektron – die Elek´ tronen.*

There are a few irregularities and exceptional cases:

(i) *das Herz* has an irregular singular, i.e. *das Herz, des Herzens, dem Herzen* (see **1.3.3b**).
(ii) *das Kleinod* 'jewel' has the irregular plural *die Kleinodien.*

(f) One neuter noun has the plural ¨*e*

das Floß *raft* – die Flöße

1.2.4 The plural ending *-s*

The plural ending *-s* occurs with nouns of all three genders, but it is restricted to some special cases.

(a) *- s* is used with many loan-words from English or French

das Atelier – die Ateliers	das Labor – die Labors
der Balkon – die Balkons	der Park – die Parks
der Chef – die Chefs	der Scheck – die Schecks
das Detail – die Details	der Streik – die Streiks
der Download – die Downloads	das Team – die Teams
das Hotel – die Hotels	der Waggon – die Waggons

Some loan-words from English and French have been assimilated and

have German plural forms. This is especially the case with English nouns in *-el* and *-er*, which almost always have the regular endingless plural, e.g. *der Tunnel – die Tunnel*; *der Computer – die Computer*, although there can be some variation, and forms with *- s* (e.g. *die Tunnels*) occur occasionally. Some loans from French like *der Balkon* tend to have the plural in *- s* if they are given a French pronunciation, i.e. [balkɔ̃], but a German plural, i.e. *die Balkone* if they are pronounced in a German fashion, i.e. [balko: n]. In writing, though, *die Balkone* is nowadays more frequent.

English loan-words in *- y* have a plural in *- ys*, e.g. *die Babys*, *die Handys*, *die Partys*, not in *-ies* like English *babies*, etc.

(b) - *s* is used with most words ending in a vowel other than unstressed - *e*

das Auto – die Autos	die Oma – die Omas
der Euro – die Euros	der Ossi – die Ossis
das Genie – die Genies	der Uhu – die Uhus

Some foreign words with unusual plurals are exceptions to this rule (see **1.2.5**), as are most feminine nouns in *- ee* and *- ie* which have regular plurals, e.g. *die Allee – die Alleen*, *die Galerie – die Galerien*.

(c) - *s* is used with abbreviations and shortened words

die AG – die AGs	der Akku – die Akkus
der PKW – die PKWs	die Lok – die Loks

This ending is often omitted with some abbreviations, especially *die LKW*, *die PKW*.

(d) - *s* is used with some North German seafaring words

The most frequent are:

das Deck – die Decks	der Kai – die Kais
das Dock – die Docks	das Wrack – die Wracks

(e) - *s* is used in colloquial speech with some words referring to persons

die Bengels, die Doktors, die Fräuleins, die Jungs (*older*: die Jungens),

die Kerls, die Kumpels, die Mädels, die Onkels

This usage is typical of non-standard North German speech, where some of them are very frequent. The standard plural form (*die Jungen, die Kumpel, die Mädel*, etc.) is preferred in writing.

(f) - *s* is used with family and other names

die Müllers, die Buddenbrooks, zwischen den beiden Deutschlands (*Zeit*)

With geographical names it is also possible to use an endingless plural, e.g. *die beiden Korea(s).*

1.2.5 Unusual plurals

A number of words, particularly those borrowed into German from the classical languages or Italian, have kept unusual plural forms. Some are in practice restricted to formal written language.

(a) Most words in - *us* or - *um* replace this by - *en* in the plural

das Album – die Alben (*coll.* Albums)	der Organismus – die Organismen
	der Rhythmus – die Rhythmen

der Genius – die Genien
der Globus – die Globen (*rarely*: die Globusse)
das Museum – die Museen
das Zentrum – die Zentren
der Zyklus – die Zyklen

Some foreign words in -*us* have adopted a native plural in -*e* (spelled with double -*ss*-):

der Bonus – die Bonusse (*also* die Boni)
der Bus – die Busse
der Krokus – die Krokusse (*rarely*: die Krokus)
der Zirkus – die Zirkusse

There are a few irregularities and exceptional cases:

der ´Kaktus – die Kak ´teen, pronounced [kakte: ən] (*coll.* die Kaktusse)

das Tempus *tense* – die Tempora

der Terminus *term* – die Termini

das Visum – die Visa (die Visen)

(b) Most words in -*ma* have a plural in -*men*

das Aroma – die Aromen (*less often*: Aromas)
das Dogma – die Dogmen
das Drama – die Dramen
die Firma – die Firmen
das Thema – die Themen (*acad.* Themata; *coll.* Themas)
das Trauma – die Traumen (*acad.* Traumata)

A few used to have a plural in -*mata*, but the plural ending -*s* is now more frequent with them:

das Dilemma – die Dilemmas (*older*: die Dilemmata)
das Komma – die Kommas (*older*: die Kommata)
das Klima – die Klimas (*older*: die Klimata *or* Klimate)
das Schema – die Schemas (*older*: die Schemata)

(c) A few words replace *-a* with *-en*

die Pizza – die Pizzen (*or* die Pizzas)
die Razzia – die Razzien (*or* die Razzias)
die Regatta – die Regatten
die Skala – die Skalen
die Veranda – die Veranden
die Villa – die Villen

(d) Other frequent words with unusual plurals

Many of these have alternatives, with the foreign plural being used chiefly in more formal registers.

das Adverb – die Adverbien
der Atlas – die Atlanten (*coll.* Atlasse)
die Basis – die Basen
das Cello – die Celli *or* Cellos
das Epos – die Epen
der Espresso – die Espressos *or* Espressi
das Examen – die Examen (*older*: Examina)
das Fossil – die Fossilien
das Fresko – die Fresken
der Index – die Indexe *or* Indices *or* Indizes
das Konto – die Konten (*rare:* Konti *or* Kontos)
das Lexikon – die Lexika (*rare:* Lexiken, *coll.* Lexikons)
das Material – die Materialien
das Mineral – die Mineralien *or* Minerale
der Mythos – die Mythen
die Praxis – die Praxen
das Prinzip – die Prinzipien
das Privileg – die Privilegien
das Prozedere – die Prozedere
das Reptil – die Reptilien
das Risiko – die Risiken (*coll.* Risikos)
der Saldo – die Salden *or* Saldos *or* Saldi
das Solo – die Soli *or* Solos
das Stadion – die Stadien
das Tempo – die Tempi (*coll.* Tempos)
das Textil – die Textilien
das Utensil – die Utensilien

1.2.6 A few nouns have two plural forms with different meanings

The following are the most common:

der Abdruck	die Abdrucke *offprints*
das Band	die Abdrücke *impressions*
die Bank	die Bande *bonds* (elev.)
der Bau	die Bänder *ribbons*
der Block	die Bänke *benches*
das Ding	die Banken *banks*
der Effekt	die Bauten *buildings*
	die Baue *den, burrow (of animal)*
	die Blöcke *lumps, blocks*
	die Blocks *blocks (houses, paper)*
	die Dinge *things*
	die Dinger *things* (coll.); *girls* (coll.)
	die Effekte *effects (results)*
	die Effekten *effects (valuables)*
das Gesicht	die Gesichter *faces*
das Land	die Gesichte *visions*
der Mann	die Länder *countries, provinces*
die Mutter	die Lande *regions (esp. in historical*
der Rat	*contexts)*
der Stock	die Männer *men*
der Strauß	die Mannen *vassals* (hist.)
das Wasser	die Mütter *mothers*
das Wort	die Muttern *nuts (for bolts)*
	die Räte *councils, officials*
	die Ratschläge *pieces of advice*
	die Stöcke *sticks*
	die Stockwerke *storeys* (sg. also: das Stockwerk)
	die Strauße *ostriches*
	die Sträuße *bunches (of flowers)*
	die Wasser *masses of water* (e.g. die Wasser des Nil)
	die Wässer *types of water* (e.g. *mineral water*)
	die Wörter *words (in isolation)*

die Worte	*words (connected words, i.e. sayings)*

Further notes on some of these:

The plural *die Blöcke* can be used for any meaning of *der Block*, but *die Blocks* can only be used in the meaning 'blocks' of paper, houses, etc. In practice, it is less common.

Although purists have long insisted on it, the distinction between *die Wörter* and *die Worte* is frequently ignored in practice, especially in less formal German.

1.2.7 Differences between English and German in using the plural

(a) German singular for English plural

There are several cases where the nearest equivalent to an English plural noun is a German singular:

das Archiv	*archives*	die Politik	*politics*
die Asche	ashes	das Protokoll	minutes (of meeting)
das Aussehen	looks	der Pyjama	pyjamas
das Benehmen	manners	der Reichtum	riches
der Besitz	possessions	im Rückstand	in arrears
der Bodensatz	dregs	der Schadenersatz	damages (legal)
die Brille	spectacles	die Schere	scissors
der Dank	thanks	das Schilf	reeds
das Fernglas	binoculars	die Treppe	(flight of) stairs, steps
der Hafer	oats	die Umgebung	surroundings
das Hauptquartier	headquarters	die Waage	scales
die Hose	trousers	die Wahl	elections
der Inhalt	contents	das Werk	works (factory)
die Kaserne	barracks	die Zange	
	wages	der Ziegenpeter	

der Lohn	means	der Zirkel	tongs
das Mittel	*the Middle Ages*		mumps
das Mittelalter			*(pair of) compasses*

Most of these German words can be used in the plural in appropriate contexts:

Warum hast du zwei Brillen gekauft?	*Why did you buy two pairs of spectacles?*
Die meisten Löhne sind erhöht worden	Most wages have been raised
Er wohnt zwei Treppen hoch	*He lives on the second floor*

(b) Some German nouns are only used in the plural

In most cases this corresponds to English usage, e.g. *die Ferien* 'holidays', *die Leute* 'people', but there are some exceptions to this.

(i) With the following, the usual equivalent of German plural nouns is an English singular:

die Flitterwochen	*honeymoon*	die Naturalien	*natural produce*
die Geschwister	brothers and sisters	die Pocken	*smallpox*
die Immobilien	property, real estate	die Ränke	*intrigue* (elev.)
die Kosten	cost(s)	die Trümmer	*rubble*
die Kurzwaren	haberdashery	die Wirren	*turmoil*
die Lebensmittel	food	die Zinsen	*interest (on a loan)*
die Möbel	*furniture*		

Note that *die Eltern* has no commonly used singular corresponding to English 'parent', although *ein Elternteil* can be used in formal German.

(ii) Names of festivals:

Ostern, *Pfingsten* and *Weihnachten* are generally treated as neuter singulars:

Wir haben ein stilles Weihnachten verbracht	*We spent a quiet Christmas*
Hast du ein schönes Ostern gehabt?	*Did you have a nice Easter?*

If they are the subject of a verb, the verb is in the singular:

Weihnachten steht vor der Tür	*Christmas is almost here*
Pfingsten fällt dieses Jahr spät	*Whitsun is late this year*

In greetings or used with an adjective, however, they are treated as plural:

Frohe Weihnachten!	Sie hat uns letzte Ostern besucht

(c) German nouns with no plural

There are a few German nouns which do not have a plural, although the nearest English equivalents do. With these a plural has to be expressed in other ways in German, using a compound or a synonym:

der Atem *breath* die Atemzüge *breaths*

das Essen *meal* die Mahlzeiten *meals* (*rarely*: die Essen)

die Furcht *fear* die Befürchtungen *fears*

der Käse *cheese* die Käsesorten *cheeses* (*rarely*: die Käse)

der Kohl *cabbage* die Kohlköpfe *cabbages*

die Liebe *love* die Liebschaften *loves* (*rarely*: die Lieben)

der Luxus *luxury* die Luxusartikel *luxuries*

das Obst *fruit* die Obstsorten *fruits*

der Rasen *lawn* die Rasenflächen *lawns*

der Raub *robbery* die Raubüberfälle *robberies*

der Sport *sport* die Sportarten *sports*

der Tod *death* die Todesfälle *deaths* (*rarely:* die Tode)

das Unglück *accident* die Unglücksfälle *accidents*

The following words are used in the singular only in German, and this corresponds to either singular or plural in English:

der Kummer *care(s)* die Sehnsucht *longing(s)* der Verdacht *suspicion(s)*

(d) German equivalents of English nouns with no plural

Some English nouns do not have a plural, although the nearest German equivalents do. With these, English expresses singular or plural in other ways, especially with an additional word for the singular:

die Auskunft *(piece of) information* die Auskünfte *information*

der Blitz *(flash of) lightning* die Blitze *flashes of lightning*

das Brot *bread, loaf* die Brote *loaves*

der Fortschritt *advance* die Fortschritte *progress*

die Hausaufgabe *(piece of) homework* die Hausaufgaben *homework*

die Information *(piece of) information* die Informationen *information*

die Kenntnis *(piece of) knowledge* die Kenntnisse *knowledge*

die Nachricht *(piece of) news* die Nachrichten *news*

der Rat *(piece of) advice* die Ratschläge *(pieces of) advice*

der Schaden *damage* die Schäden *(instances of) damage*

(e) Using a singular noun for items of clothing and parts of the body

With reference to two or more people, a singular noun is used in German for parts of the body or items of clothing if each person involved only has one of each. In these contexts English normally uses the plural:

Alle hoben **die rechte Hand**	*They all raised their right hands*
Ihnen klopfte **das Herz**	*Their hearts were beating*

To use the plural *die Herzen* in the last example could suggest that each person had more than one heart. Nevertheless, exceptions to this rule are not unknown, especially if the possessive is used rather than the definite article (see **4.6.1**), e.g.:

Die Passagiere drehten **ihre Köpfe** (*Frisch*)	*The passengers turned their heads*

1.2.8 Nouns of weight, measurement and value

Masculine and neuter nouns of weight, measurement and value, preceded by a numeral, have the singular form, not the plural:

zwei **Pfund** Kirschen zwei **Sack** Kartoffeln drei **Dutzend** Eier zwei **Fass** Wein

zwei **Paar** Schuhe zwanzig englische **Pfund** um ein paar **Dollar** mehr

zwei, drei, mehrere **Glas** Bier	*two, three several glasses of beer*
ein paar **Schluck** (Kaffee)	a few mouthfuls (of coffee)
Wir hatten zehn **Grad** Kälte	We had ten degrees of frost
zehn **Schritt**	ten paces
3 **Schuss** – ein Euro 50	*3 shots for one euro fifty*

The singular is also typically used when shopping or ordering in

restaurants:

> Diese hier sind gerade das Richtige. Geben Sie mir bitte drei **Stück** !
>
> Bringen Sie mir bitte drei **Erdbeereis** und zwei Glas **Bier** !

However, if they are seen as individual objects, masculine and neuter nouns of measurement do have plural endings:

Auf dem Hof lagen zehn **Fässer** *There were ten barrels in the yard*

Feminine nouns of measurement do take the plural form:

zehn **Flaschen** Wein zwei **Ladungen** Holz vier **Tassen** Kaffee

However, *die Mark* never has a plural ending: *zwanzig Mark*.

For the agreement of the verb with measurement phrases, see **10.1.4f**.

1.3 The declension of nouns to show case

CASE shows the relationship of a noun or noun phrase to the sentence as a whole (see Chapter 2), and German typically indicates the four cases NOMINATIVE, ACCUSATIVE, GENITIVE and DATIVE by means of INFLECTION, i.e. by changing the form of the words in the noun phrase, and these changes are known as the DECLENSION of these words. In German it is most often the determiner and adjectives which decline rather than the noun itself (see Chapters 4–6), but there are some instances where German nouns have inflections in the form of ENDINGS to show case, in particular:

- **masculine** and **neuter** nouns add - ***s*** **or** - ***es*** in the **genitive singular**
- - ***n*** is added in the **dative plural** if possible

Table 1.7 shows the declension of some typical regular nouns.

Table 1.7 Case endings of regular nouns

	Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nom.	der Vater	die Väter	die Frau	die Frauen	das Kind	die Kinder
Acc.	den Vater	die Väter	die Frau	die Frauen	das Kind	die Kinder
Gen.	des Vater**s**	der Väter	der Frau	der Frauen	des Kind**es**	der Kinder
Dat.	dem Vater	den Väter**n**	der Frau	den Frauen	dem Kind	den Kinder**n**
Nom.	der Park	die Parks	die Hand	die Hände	das Jahr	die Jahre
Acc.	den Park	die Parks	die Hand	die Hände	das Jahr	die Jahre
Gen.	des Park**s**	der Parks	der Hand	der Hände	des Jahr**es**	der Jahre
Dat.	dem Park	den Parks	der Hand	den Hände**n**	dem Jahr	den Jahre**n**

An important group of masculine nouns, mostly denoting living male beings, have the so-called 'weak' declension, with the ending - ***(e)n*** **in the plural and all the cases of the singular except the nominative**. Examples are shown in **Table 1.8**.

Table 1.8 'Weak' masculine nouns

	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nom.	der Junge	die Junge **n**	der Student	die Student
Acc.	den Junge **n**	die Junge **n**	den Student	**en**
Gen.	des Junge **n**	der Junge **n**	**en**	die Student
Dat.	dem Junge **n**	den Junge **n**	des Student	**en**
			en	der Student
			dem Student	**en**
			en	den Student
				en

This section gives more detailed information on noun declension:

- The declension of **regular nouns** (section **1.3.1**)
- **'Weak' masculine** nouns (section **1.3.2**)
- The declension of **irregular masculine** and **neuter** nouns (section **1.3.3**)
- The **dative singular** ending - ***e*** (section **1.3.4**)
- The **genitive singular** ending - ***(e)s*** (section **1.3.5**)
- The declension of **names** (section **1.3.6**)

1.3.1 The declension of regular nouns

With most German nouns there are two endings to signal case, which are added to the basic singular or plural forms, giving the regular declension patterns illustrated in **Table 1.7**. These endings are:

(a) Masculine and neuter nouns add - *s* or - *es* in the genitive singular

des Bahnhof **s**, des Busch **es**, des Fenster **s**, des Mann **(e)s**, des Tal **(e)s**

For the use of - *s* or - *es* and the occasional omission of this ending, see **1.3.5**.

(b) - *n* is added in the dative plural if possible

den Kinder **n**, den Fenster **n**, den Hunde **n**, den Stühle **n**, den Töchter **n**

If the plural of the noun ends in - *n* or - *s*, this ending cannot be added in the dative plural:

den Gärten, den Frauen, den Autos, den Müllers

Further notes on the dative plural of nouns:

(i) Nouns of measurement often drop the - *n* after numerals: *eine Entfernung von fünf Kilometer(n).*
(ii) In colloquial German the ending - *n* is sometimes omitted, and one may even see notices such as *Eis mit Früchte*. This is considered incorrect.
(iii) No - *n* is used in the set phrase *aus aller Herren Länder* 'from the four corners of the earth'

1.3.2 'Weak' masculine nouns

An important group of masculine nouns, most of which denote male

human beings or animals, have the ending - *n* or - *en* throughout the plural **and in all singular cases** except the nominative. These are called (for no good reason) 'weak' masculine nouns, and their inflections are shown in **Table 1.8**. Nouns ending in - *e* or - *er* have the ending *-n*, like *der Junge*, nouns ending in another consonant have the ending - *en*, like *der Student*.

(a) The 'weak' masculine nouns fall into three main groups

(i) those which end in - *e* in the nominative singular. These all denote male human beings or animals:

der Affe, der Bote, der Chinese, der Franzose, der Schwabe

Note that there are a few masculine nouns in - *e* which denote things. These have different inflectional endings, in particular the eight irregular nouns which decline like *der Name* (see **1.3.3**). Two further nouns, *der Käse* and *der Charme*, are regular.

(ii) a large number of foreign nouns, in particular those with the following stressed endings:

-and, *-ant*, *-aph*, *-arch*, *-at*, *-ent*, - *et*, *-ist*, *-krat*, *-log(e)*, *-nom*, - *on*, *-ot*

Most of these (but by no means all) denote male human beings, e.g.:

der Doktorand, der Diamant, der Monarch, der Automat, der Demokrat, der Student,

der Komet, der Komponist, der Psycholog(e), der Astronom, der Dämon, der Idiot

There are also a number of such words with other endings, e.g.:

der Barbar, der Chirurg, der Kamerad, der Katholik, der Prinz,

der Tyrann

(iii) a few native nouns denoting male humans or animals which do not end in - *e* in the nominative singular. The most frequent are:

der Bär	*bear*	der Hirt	*shepherd*
der Bauer	peasant	der Mensch	human being
der Bayer	Bavarian	der Nachbar	neighbour
der Bub	*lad* (S.G.)	der Narr	fool
der Fink	*finch*	der Oberst	colonel
der Fürst	prince	der Ochs	ox
der Graf	count	der Papagei	parrot
der Held	hero	der Spatz	sparrow
der Herr	*gentleman*	der Tor	*fool* (lit.)

(b) Weak masculine nouns have no ending in the singular if they are used without a determiner

This avoids the possibility of confusion between singular and plural:

Die Situation war für Arzt und **Patient** kritisch	*The situation was critical for doctor and patient alike*
Ich schrieb an Christian Schulze, **Präsident** des Gesangvereins	*I wrote to Christian Schulze, the president of the choral society*

(c) The singular endings of weak masculine nouns are often dropped in colloquial German

i.e. they have the 'regular' forms: *den Bär, des Bärs, dem Bär*. In principle, this usage is considered non-standard and incorrect, especially in writing, but it is clearly becoming more widespread, especially with endingless forms of the accusative and dative singular. Indeed, with a few of these nouns it has come to be considered acceptable, so that with these the regular forms are in practice now used at least as frequently as the 'weak' endings. This is the case with

the following:

der Magnet, der Oberst, der Papagei, der Partisan, der Spatz, der Untertan

Rather less frequently, regular endings are also used and felt to be acceptable with *der Bauer* and *der Nachbar*.

der Typ 'bloke', 'guy' (see **1.2.1e**) is often used with the 'weak' singular endings in colloquial speech: *den Typen*, *des Typen*, *dem Typen*. 'Weak' singular endings occasionally occur with other words, even in writing, especially those denoting male humans or animals, e.g. *des Autoren, des Zwergen*, but these forms are considered incorrect.

(d) The noun der Herr

der Herr is a 'weak' masculine noun, but it has the ending - *n* in the singular and - *en* in the plural, e.g.:

Singular: *den, des, dem Herr* ***n*** Plural: *die, der den Herr* ***en***

Unlike other 'weak' masculine nouns it always keeps the ending - *n* in the singular even if used without a determiner, e.g. (when addressing an envelope): *Herrn Alfred Bletzer*.

(e) 'Weak' masculine nouns should not be confused with adjectives used as nouns

Nouns like *der Beamte* and *der Vorsitzende* seem to have similar endings to 'weak' masculine nouns, but in fact they have the endings of adjectives, see **6.2**.

1.3.3 Irregular masculine and neuter nouns

(a) Nine masculine nouns are irregular

They have the ending - *n* in the plural and in the accusative and dative singular, but - *ns* in the genitive singular:

	Singular	Plural
Nom.	der Name	die Nam **en**
Acc.	den Nam **en**	die Nam **en**
Gen.	des Nam **ens**	der Nam **en**
Dat.	dem Nam **en**	den Nam **en**

The following nouns belong to this group:

der Buchstabe	*letter* (of alphabet)	der Haufe	*heap, pile*
der Friede	*peace*	der Name	name
der Funke	spark	der Same	seed
der Gedanke	thought	der Wille	*will*
der Glaube	*belief*		

The form of some of these words can vary, so that *der Friede*, *der Funke* and *der Same* have alternative regular forms with - *n* in the nominative singular, i.e. *der Frieden, der Funken, der Samen.* In practice, *der Haufen* and *der Samen* have almost completely replaced *der Haufe* and *der Same*, *der Frieden* is much more frequent than *der Friede*, but *der Funke* is still more usual than *der Funken.*

(b) The neuter noun *das Herz* is irregular

The neuter noun *das Herz* has similar forms to the irregular masculine nouns:

	Singular	Plural
Nom.	das Herz	die Herzen
Acc.	das Herz	die Herzen
Gen.	des Herzens	der Herzen
Dat.	dem Herzen	den Herzen

However, regular singular forms, i.e. *des Herzes*, *dem Herz*, are not uncommon in colloquial speech and medical writing.

1.3.4 Dative singular in *-e*

In older German, regular masculine and neuter nouns, particularly those of one syllable, regularly added - *e* in the dative singular, e.g.:

dem Fluss **e**, dem Mann **e**, dem Tag **e**, dem Tal **e**

This 'dative - *e*' is now uncommon, but it is still not unusual in formal writing, reflecting traditional literary usage, although it can sometimes sound affected or facetious. However, it is still current in some set phrases:

das Kind mit dem Bade ausschütten	*to throw out the baby with the bathwater*
im Falle, dass	in the event that
bis zu einem gewissen Grade	*to a certain extent*
im Grunde genommen	*basically*
jdm. zum Halse heraushängen	to be sick of sth.
jdm. im Halse stecken bleiben	to stick in sb.'s throat
nach Hause	home
zu Hause	at home
im Jahre 2017	in 2017
auf dem Lande	in the country
im Laufe des Tages	in the course of the day
bei Lichte betrachtet/besehen	seen in the (cold) light of day
in gewissem Maße	to a certain extent
jdn. zu Rate ziehen	to consult sb.
in diesem Sinne	in this sense
am Tage	by day
unter Tage arbeiten	*to work below ground*
(nicht) zum Zuge kommen	(*not*) *to get a look- in*

Some of these phrases are also often used without the *-e*, e.g. *im Lauf*

des Tages, am Tag.

1.3.5 The masculine and neuter genitive singular

(a) The endings - *es* and - *s*

Regular masculine and neuter nouns have the ending - *s* or - *es* in the genitive singular, e.g. *des Buchs*, *des Tages*. The choice between these is only fixed where the ending -*s* would be impossible or difficult to pronounce, i.e.:

The ending - ***es*** must be used with nouns ending in - ***s***, - ***ß***, - ***x*** or - *z*, e.g.:

des Krebs **es**, des Maß **es**, des Reflex **es**, des Sitz **es**, des Kreuz **es**

Nouns in - *nis* have double - *ss* -, e.g. *des Ereignisses*.

It is also the usual option with nouns in - ***sch***, - ***st*** or - *zt* (although -*s* is possible with these), e.g.:

des Tisch **es**, des Dienst **es**, des Arzt **es**

The ending - ***s***, on the other hand, is the usual choice

(i) with words ending in a vowel:

des Büros, des Knies, des Rehs, des Schnees, des Schuhs, des Sofas, des Uhus

(ii) with names and foreign words:

Schillers Dramen, die Einwohner Berlins, des Hotels, des Klubs, des Prinzips, des Rheins

(iii) with polysyllabic words, especially those ending in an unstressed syllable:

des Abends, des Königs, des Lehrers, des Mädchens, des Schicksals, des Wagens, des Zufalls

With other words the choice is largely a matter of individual preference, and either ending is regarded as correct. Some speakers feel that the ending - *es* is more formal or elevated, but this is not borne out by actual usage, and there often seems to be quite arbitrary variation between individual words.

Nevertheless, which ending is used does seem to depend in practice on the frequency of the word, with a **clear preference for** - ***es*** with the most commonly used words, especially if they end in more than one consonant. Thus, for example, *des Gastes* and *des Hundes* are rather more frequent than *des Gasts* and *des Hunds*.

(b) Lack of the genitive ending - *(e)s*

There is a clear and increasing tendency to omit the ending - *(e)s* in the genitive singular of masculine and neuter nouns. In most cases this would be considered incorrect, but it has become accepted in the following contexts.

(i) with the names of the **days of the week**, **months and seasons**

in den Abendstunden des folgenden Mittwoch(s)

am Morgen des zehnten Januar(s)

die kräftigste Zyklone des beginnenden Herbst (*NZZ*)

The omission of the ending - *s* with days of the week is widespread, but not always accepted as correct.

(ii) with names of **artistic styles** and **epochs**

des Barock(s), des Empire(s), des Jugendstil(s), des Rokoko(s)

(iii)with abbreviations and **other parts of speech used as**

nouns

With these, the omission of the ending is optional, e.g.:

ein Stück des eignen Ich(s)	des LKW(s)
eines gewissen Jemand(s)	die Aussprache des modernen
meines Gegenüber(s)	Deutsch(s)

The currency unit *der Euro* is treated in this way, with the ending *-s* optional: *des Euro(s)*.

(iv) with **technical terms** or **specific names**, e.g.:

des Dativ(s), des Dynamo(s), des Establishment(s), des Gulasch(s), des Holunder(s), des Interesse(s), des Islam(s), des Karfreitag(s), des Ostersonntag(s), des Parlament(s), des Parterre(s), des Radar(s)

(v) after prepositions when the noun has no adjective or determiner with it, e.g.:

laut Bericht	wegen Schnee geschlossen	trotz Geldmangel

In the following example we see how the omission of - *s* can depend on the absence or presence of an article or adjective:

eine Agrar-Reform, die aber wegen **Geldmangel** und **gebremsten Eifers** nur langsam vorankommt (*Zeit*)	*an agricultural reform which is proceeding only slowly because of a lack of money and limited enthusiasm*

However, usage is still variable, and the genitive ending is not unusual even if no article or adjective is present:

eine Strafuntersuchung gegen mehrere Stadtpolizisten wegen **schwerer Körperverletzung** und **Amtsmissbrauchs** (*NZZ*)	*a criminal investigation against several city police officers for grievous bodily harm and abuse of office*

(vi) with **foreign nouns ending in** - ***s*** or - ***x***

With these it is usual to omit the ending:

> des Atlas, des Chaos, des Globus, des Index, des Rhythmus, des Sozialismus

The most frequent of these words may, alternatively, have the ending - *es*, e.g. *des Atlasses*, and some foreign words, such as *der Bus* and *der Kongress*, have been totally assimilated and only have the ending - *es*, e.g. *des Busses, des Kongresses*. In general, if a word has a regular German plural rather than an unusual foreign one (or as an alternative to it, see **1.2.5**), it will take the genitive ending - *es*.

1.3.6 Declension of proper names and titles

(a) Geographical names and proper names without titles or an article add - *s* in the genitive singular

Werner Faymans Politik	Elisabeths Bücher
die Werke Johann Sebastian Bachs	der Tod Friedrichs des Großen
Flüge innerhalb Deutschlands	Deutschlands Straßen

Personal names ending in - *s*, - *ß*, - *x*, - *z* do not add - *s* in the genitive. In writing an apostrophe may be used:

> Fritz' Schwester, Agnes' Hut, Perikles' Tod, Marx' Einfluss

In speech, a construction with *von* is usual and can be used in writing as an alternative to the apostrophe, see also **2.4**:

> der Hut von Agnes, der Tod von Perikles, der Einfluss von Marx

With geographical names in - *s*, - *ß*, - *x*, - *z*, only a phrase with *von* is possible:

die Straßen von Paris	die Geschichte von Florenz

In everyday speech, especially in North Germany, the generic names of members of the family are often treated as names, e.g.:

Tantes Haus, Mutters Kleid, Vaters Geburtstag

The use of such nouns with simply the ending - *s* and a possessive pronoun (rather like English), e.g. *mein Vaters Team*, *bei meiner Tochters Computer* has been noted recently, but such usage is clearly not standard.

(b) Proper names do not usually have the ending - *s* in the genitive singular if they are used with an article

die Rolle des Egmont	die Gedichte des alten Goethe
die Werke eines Johann Sebastian Bach	die Briefe dieses Thomas Schmidt
die Bücher unseres kleinen Michael	

(c) With geographical names used with an article the ending - (*e*) *s* is optional in the genitive singular

eines vereinigten Europa(s)	die Einwohner des geteilten Berlin(s)
die Kuppe des Feldberg(s)	
an den Ufern des Nil(s)	die Ruinen des alten Rom(s)

If the article is part of the name (e.g. with rivers), adding the ending **is** more usual, e.g. *an den Ufern des Rheins* (less frequent: *des Rhein*).

Foreign geographical names do not usually have an ending, e.g. *die Berge des High Peak*.

(d) Proper names with titles in the genitive singular

(i) If there is no article, only the name (or the last name) is declined:

König Heinrichs Politik	am Hof Kaiser Ottos des Großen
Onkel Roberts Haus	Bundeskanzler Schröders
Hans Joachims neue Bücher	Amtsantritt
	Tante Käthes Wohnung

(ii) If there is an article, only the title is declined:

die Siege des Kaisers Karl	die Hauptstadt des Landes Niedersachsen

(iii) If the title is a weak masculine noun, the ending - *n* is optional:

Wir bedauern Genosse(n) Schmidts Versetzung nach Bautzen

However, *Herr* is always declined (see **1.3.2d**), and a following title may then lack the ending - *s*: *der Vortrag des Herrn Generaldirektor(s) Kramer*.

(iv) *Doktor* and *Fräulei n*, used as titles, are never declined:

die Erfolge unseres Doktor Meyer	die Mutter dieses Fräulein Sauer

(e) Titles and names of books, plays, newspapers, hotels, companies

(i) These are fully declined in the appropriate case, e.g.:

ein Lied aus Schillers „Räubern", aus Brechts „kaukasischem Kreidekreis"

Sie las es in der „Süddeutschen Zeitung", im „Spiegel"

Ich wohne im „Goldenen Apostel"

(ii) After a word which describes what kind of thing it is, a full title in quotation marks remains in the nominative:

in Brechts Drama „Der kaukasische Kreidekreis“

im Hotel „Weißer Löwe“

in der Wochenzeitschrift „Der Spiegel“

(iii) A short title in the genitive with an article may drop the *-(e)s*:

in der letzten Strophe des Erlkönig(s)

(iv) Names of companies should always be declined in full:

der Überschuss bei der Süddeutschen Zucker-AG

die Verwaltung der ehemaligen Deutschen Reichsbahn

This rule is frequently ignored in practice.

Case

The grammatical category of CASE relates to the inflection of a NOUN, PRONOUN or NOUN PHRASE, i.e. changing the form of these by endings which show their function in the sentence or clause. German has four cases: NOMINATIVE, ACCUSATIVE, GENITIVE and DATIVE. All of these have a range of uses, as summarized in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1 Main uses of the German cases

Nominative	
marks the subject of the verb marks the complement of copular verbs like sein **used with the noun in isolation**	**Der Fußballspieler** schoss ein Tor *The football player shot a goal* Brecht war **ein großer Dichter** *Brecht was a great writer* **Dein Freund**, wann siehst du ihn wieder? *Your friend, when will you see him again?*
Accusative	
marks the direct object of the verb **used after some prepositions** **used in adverbial phrases, e.g. to mark distance or length of time** **used in conventional greetings and wishes**	Ich kaufe **einen großen Fernseher** *I'm buying a big television* Sie tat es für **ihren Bruder** *She did it for her brother* Anita blieb **den ganzen Tag** zu Hause *Anita stayed at home the whole day* **Guten Abend! Herzlichen Glückwunsch!** *Good evening. Congratulations!*

Genitive	
links nouns, e.g. to show possession **used after some prepositions**	Der Ton **dieses Radios** ist furchtbar *The sound of this radio is awful* Sie lief trotz **ihres hohen Alters** schnell *She ran fast despite her advanced age*
Dative	
marks the indirect object of the verb marks the sole (dative) object of some verbs can show possession, especially with clothing and parts of the body used after some prepositions **used with many adjectives**	Ich gebe **dem Hamster** sein Futter *I'm giving the hamster its food* Sie will **ihrem Freund** helfen *She wants to help her friend* Sie zogen **dem Verletzten** das Hemd aus *They took the injured man's shirt off* Wir suchten überall nach **dem Geld** *We looked everywhere for the money* Dieses Gespräch war **mir** sehr nützlich *This conversation was very useful for me*

Case is an area of the grammar where the differences between English and German seem most striking. English only has case forms for the possessive in - *s*, e.g. my brother **'s** *bike* ~ das Fahrrad mein **es** *Bruder* ***s***, and in a few pronouns which change to show the **subject** or the **object** of the verb, such as *I~me* and *she~her*. The function of parts of a sentence or clause are shown in other ways in English, typically by the word order. Compare:

> *The young man* [subject] *has given his friend* [indirect object] *the suitcase* [direct object]

> D **er** jung **e** *Mann* [nominative] hat sein **em** *Freund* [dative] d **en** *Koffer* [accusative] *gegeben*

In German the function of the noun phrases is shown by the endings, not the word order – which means that you can change the order round without changing the basic meaning (although the emphasis may be a little different), but if you change the order in English the meaning changes totally, e.g.:

His friend has given the young man the suitcase

Sein **em** Freund hat d **er** jung **e** Mann d **en** *Koffer gegeben*

We tell what is the subject of the verb in English by its position before the verb, but in German that information is in the ending (here for the nominative case: d **er** jung **e** *Mann*). In this way, inflection for case is vital for showing the structure of a German sentence (and understanding the sentence), and this is particularly apparent in relation to verb valency (see **Chapter 16**) and word order (see **Chapter 19**).

Further details on the use of the cases in German are given in the remainder of this chapter, as follows:

- the uses of the **nominative** case (section **2.1**)
- the uses of the **accusative** case (section **2.2**)
- the uses of the **genitive** case (section **2.3**) and its replacement by ***von*** (section **2.4**)
- the uses of the **dative** case (section **2.5**)
- case use in **apposition** (section **2.6**) and **measurement phrases** (section **2.7**)

2.1 The nominative case

2.1.1 The nominative case marks the subject of the finite verb

This is the most important and characteristic function of the nominative

case. The FINITE VERB has an ending which agrees with the subject, see **10.1.4**:

Der Zug war nicht pünktlich	Heute war ausnahmsweise **der Mittagszug** nicht pünktlich
Heute war **der Zug** nicht pünktlich	

For more details see **16.2**. As the subject is shown by the endings of the nominative case it does not have to precede the verb, as it does in English, see **19.2**.

2.1.2 The nominative is used with nouns or pronouns in isolation

In this way it functions as a neutral case, used with nouns without any function in a sentence.

Ein schöner Tag heute, nicht?

Und **dein Onkel**, wann siehst du ihn wieder?

Und **du**, was meinst du dazu?

It is used in a similar way for persons and things addressed, and in exclamations:

Was beunruhigt dich, **mein Lieber** ?	**Herr Müller**, Telefon für Sie!
Ach **du liebe Zeit** !	**Der unverschämte Kerl** !

It is also used in so-called 'absolute' phrases, where the noun phrase is placed outside the main framework of the clause:

als er an den Mann dachte, zu dem er jetzt gehen musste, **dieser Mann aus Röders Abteilung** (*Seghers*)	*when he thought of the man he now had to go to, that man from Röder's company*
Er saß am Feuer, **der Hund zu seinen Füßen**	*He sat by the fire, (with) the dog at his feet*

The type of absolute phrase in the last example is found mainly in formal, especially literary German; other registers generally prefer a construction with *mit*, e.g. *mit dem Hund zu seinen Füßen.*

2.1.3 The nominative occurs in the predicate complement of some verbs

These are the so-called COPULAR VERBS, with a PREDICATE COMPLEMENT which describes the subject of the verb in some way. There are not many of these verbs, but they are very frequent, i.e. *sein*, *werden*, *bleiben*, *heiße n* and *scheinen*:

Karl ist, wird, bleibt **mein Freund**	Ich will **ein Schuft** heißen
Er scheint **ein großartiger Turner**	Er wurde **der Weise** genannt

More information about these verbs and the predicate complement is given in section **16.6**.

2.2 The accusative case

2.2.1 The accusative case marks the direct object of transitive verbs

This is the most important function of the accusative case. TRANSITIVE VERBS are those which have a DIRECT OBJECT, which is typically a person or thing directly affected by the action of the verb in some way. Further details are given in section **16.3**.

Ich habe **einen Salat** gegessen	Die Putzfrau hat **den Fußboden** gebohnert
Sie hat mir **den Inhalt** erklärt	Er hat **die Tauben** im Park vergiftet

A very few verbs, e.g. *kosten* and *lehren*, take two objects in the accusative, see **16.3.3**.

INTRANSITIVE VERBS, by contrast, are those which do not have a direct object in the accusative case. A few appear to be an exception to this definition, because they can sometimes be used with a following accusative noun phrase, e.g.:

Er starb **einen schweren Tod**	Sie schlief **den Schlaf** der Gerechten

This usage, however, is strictly limited to a specific noun phrase, called a 'cognate' accusative noun. Its meaning is related to that of the verb and it repeats or explains more fully the idea expressed by the verb.

2.2.2 The accusative case is used in some adverbial phrases

(a) A noun phrase in the accusative case can be used adverbially to indicate time

In these phrases the accusative case used without a preposition can indicate

(i) a length of time lying entirely in the past, present or future. The accusative usually corresponds to an English phrase with 'for' (see **18.1.3c**). The noun phrase in the accusative may be followed by *lang*, or, emphasizing the duration, *über* or *hindurch*:

Ich war **einen Monat** / **drei Monate** (lang) in Kassel	*I was in Kassel for a month/for three months*
Dort blieb sie **viele Jahre** (lang)	*She stayed there for many years*
Jahre hindurch blieb er im Gefängnis	*He stayed in prison for years (on end)*
Ich bin jede Woche **einen Tag** (lang) in Kaiserslautern	*I am in Kaiserslautern one day every week*
Er lag **den ganzen Tag** (lang/	*He lay in bed the whole day/all*

über) im Bett	*day (long)*
den ganzen Sommer (lang)	*all summer, for the whole of the summer*
den ganzen Winter hindurch/ über	*throughout the winter*
sein ganzes Leben (lang)	*all his life/for his whole life*
Wo warst du **die ganze Zeit** ?	*Where were you the whole time?*
eine ganze Weile	*for quite a while*

(ii) a specific time or period of time. In these contexts the usual English equivalent is a phrase with no preposition, e.g.:

Einen Augenblick zuvor hätte sie ihn noch retten können	*A moment before she could still have saved him*
Er kommt **jeden Tag** / **jede Woche**	*He comes every day/every week*
Sie fährt **alle vierzehn Tage** / **alle paar Jahre** in die Schweiz	*She goes to Switzerland every two weeks/every few years*
Jede halbe Stunde kommt er vorbei	*Every half hour he comes past*
Wir besuchen sie **nächsten Dienstag** / **kommenden Dienstag**	*We are visiting her next Tuesday*
Wir besuchen sie **nächste** / **kommende Woche**	*We are visiting her next week*
Wir werden **dieses Jahr** nicht verreisen	*We're not going away this year*
Sie ist **2011** wieder zur Vorsitzenden des Vereins gewählt worden	*In 2011 she was elected chair of the society again*
Ich sah sie **letzten Freitag** / **vorigen Freitag** / **vergangenen Freitag**	*I saw her last Friday*

In many contexts a prepositional phrase can be used as an alternative to a phrase in the accusative case, as in these typical alternatives to the examples above:

am nächsten/kommenden Dienstag	*next Tuesday*

am letzten/vorigen/vergangenen Freitag	last Friday
in der nächsten/kommenden Woche	next week
in diesem Jahr	this year
im Jahre 2011	*in 2011*

Further information about the use of *an* and *in* in time phrases can be found in sections **18.3.2b** and **18.3.7b**. Phrases with the accusative case tend to be more frequent in everyday speech, whereas those with a preposition are rather more common in writing.

Time phrases in the accusative can also be alternatives to phrases with other prepositions, e.g.:

Ich bin **Mittag** (*or* um Mittag) wieder zu Hause	*I'll be back home at noon*
Fährst du **Ostern** (*or* zu Ostern) zu deinen Eltern?	Are you going to your parents at Easter?
Sind Sie **das erste Mal** (*or* zum ersten Mal) hier?	*Is this the first time you've been here?*

The accusative is also used in dates in letters: *Essen, den 4. August*. Further information on usage in dates is given in section **8.5.3**.

In time phrases the nouns *Anfang*, *Mitte* and *Ende* are used in the accusative case without a preposition:

Er ist **Anfang Januar** / **Mitte Januar** / **Ende Januar** gestorben	*He died at the beginning of January/in the middle of January/ at the end of January*
Ich fahre schon **Anfang** / **Ende** nächster Woche	I'm leaving at the beginning/at the end of next week
Anfang 2009 fanden die Wahlen zum 18. hessischen Landtag statt	*The 18th regional elections in the state of Hesse took place at the beginning of 2009*

If *Anfang* and *Ende* are used without a following time phrase, they are preceded by *am*, e.g. ***am*** *Anfang* 'at the beginning', ***am*** *Ende* 'at the

end'.

(b) A noun phrase in the accusative case can be used with verbs and adverbs denoting motion to indicate distance travelled

Ich bin **den ganzen Weg** zu Fuß gegangen	Sie kam **den Berg** herauf
Wir sind **die Straße** heruntergekommen	Sie kam **die Treppe** herunter

This adverbial accusative is particularly common with the direction adverbs formed with *hin-* and *her-* (see **7.2.4a**).

(c) A noun phrase in the accusative case can be used with an appropriate adjective following to express a measurement or a value

Das ist **keinen Pfennig** wert	Der Tisch ist **ein(en) Meter** breit
Das Kind ist **vier Jahre** alt	Der Sack wiegt **einen Zentner**

2.2.3 Other uses of the accusative case

(a) Conventional greetings and wishes are in the accusative case

The accusative case with these is naturally only evident with masculine nouns:

Guten Morgen, Tag, Abend	Gute Nacht	Guten Rutsch (ins neue Jahr)
Schönen Sonntag	Besten Dank	Herzlichen
	Gute Besserung	

Viel Vergnügen	Glückwunsch Angenehme Reise

The accusative case is used as these phases are in practice the direct objects of a verb like *wünschen*, which is understood.

(b) A few adjectives are used with the accusative case

e.g. *etwas gewohnt sein* 'to be used to something':

Als einstiger Skilehrer ist er sich **den Saisonbetrieb** gewohnt (*SGT*)	*As a former ski instructor he is used to seasonal work*

Further details on these adjectives are given in **6.3.2**.

(c) The accusative case is sometimes used in 'absolute' phrases

Phrases like this typically describe a noun, e.g.:

Wilhelmine, **den Kopf geneigt**, erlaubt ihm, ihr Haar zu lösen (*Wolf*)	*Wilhelmine, her head bowed, allows him to untie her hair*
Den Bauch voller Fracht, fliegt der Jet nach Fernost (*Spiegel*)	*Its belly full of freight, the jet flies to the Far East*

This usage is largely restricted to formal or literary registers and is uncommon even there, with the more usual construction with *mit* often being preferred, e.g. *mit dem Bauch voller Fracht.*

(d) The accusative case is used with a number of prepositions

Information about these is given in sections **18.1** and **18.3**.

2.3 The genitive case

In modern German the genitive case is characteristic of more formal, especially written registers, and it is often considered a symbolic marker of 'best' usage. However, it can sound affected in informal registers and other constructions are frequently preferred in everyday speech. This section outlines the current uses of the genitive with this general proviso.

Information about the contexts in which a phrase with *von* may be preferred to the genitive is given in section **2.4**, and the use of the genitive case in measurement phrases is treated in section **2.7**.

2.3.1 The main function of the genitive case is to link noun phrases

For this, English typically uses the preposition *of*. We often think of the genitive as the 'possessive' case, but its range is wider, since it can be used:

to express possession	das Haus meines Bruders
as a partitive	die Hälfte des Kuchens
for the subject of a verbal noun	die Abfahrt des Zuges
for the object of a verbal noun	der Umbau des Hauses
to qualify a noun	ein Strahl der Hoffnung
to define a noun	die Pflicht der Dankbarkeit

2.3.2 The position of noun phrases in the genitive

A noun phrase in the genitive case usually **follows** the noun phrase on which it depends:

die Gefahr **eines Erdbebens**	das Rauschen **der Bäume**

However, proper names in the genitive usually come first:

Karls Freund	**Annas** Stereoanlage	**Frau Benders** Haus
Heinrich Bölls Werke	**Figaros** Hochzeit	**Deutschlands** Grenzen

In written German, though, personal names without a title and geographical names can follow the noun phrase which they depend on:

ein Freund **Karls**	die Werke **Heinrich Bölls**	die Grenzen **Deutschlands**

Otherwise, the genitive comes first only in old-fashioned literary usage, or in set phrases:

seiner Vorfahren großes altes Haus (*Th. Mann*)	*the large old house of his ancestors*
Undank ist **der Welt** Lohn	*Never expect thanks for anything*

In other contexts this order sounds ironic or facetious:

Podolski fordert doch immer Ruhe im Verein. Dann wird er auch sicher **des Trainers** Entscheidung akzeptieren (*forum.express.de*)	*Podolski does always demand quiet at the club. So he will certainly accept the manager's decision*

2.3.3 Other uses of the genitive case

(a) Some verbs take an object in the genitive case

There are very few of these in modern German, e.g. *bedürfen*, *gedenken*, *sich ermächtigen* and they are all restricted to formal written registers. Full details are given in section **16.7**.

(b) Noun phrases in the genitive case after the verb *sein*

In a few fixed expressions a noun phrase in the genitive occurs as the predicate complement of *sein*. The following are still frequent:

Wir sind gleichen Alters	*We are of the same age*
Ich bin der Ansicht, dass …	*I am of the view that …*
Ich bin der Auffassung, dass …	*I am of the opinion that …*
Er ist guter Dinge	He is in good spirits
Wir waren guter/schlechter Laune	We were in a good/bad mood
Sie ist der Meinung, dass …	*She is of the opinion that …*
Dann sind wir des Todes	Then we are doomed
Sie sind der festen Überzeugung, dass …	*They are firmly convinced that …*
Das Wort ist griechischen Ursprungs	*The word is of Greek origin*

(c) The genitive case of nouns denoting time can refer to indefinite or habitual time

These are now mainly set expressions, and they are extended by adjectives only in formal registers:

eines Tages	*one day*
eines schönen Tages	one fine day
eines Sonntags	one Sunday
eines Morgens	one morning
eines Sonntagmorgens	one Sunday morning
eines nebligen Morgens	one foggy morning
dieser Tage	in the next/last few days
eines Nachts	*one night*

Note the form ***eines Nachts***, despite the fact that *die Nacht* is feminine.

Some genitive phrases have become simple adverbs, and they are written with a small initial letter:

morgens, vormittags	*in the mornings*
nachmittags, abends	in the afternoons, in the evenings
tags, nachts	by day, at night
dienstags, freitags	on Tuesdays, on Fridays
wochentags, werktags	on weekdays, on working days

donnerstagabends/donnerstags	on Thursday evenings
abends	from morning till night
von morgens bis abends	in the summer, in the winter
sommers, winters	*all year round*
sommers wie winters	

These adverbs are sometimes used to refer to single occasions (e.g. *nachmittags* for *am Nachmitta g*), especially in South Germany, e.g.:

Wir kamen dort **sonntags** auf dem Spaziergang vorüber (*Gaiser*)	*We came past there on Sunday during our walk*

The adverbs *morgens, abends*, etc. originated from noun phrases in the genitive with the definite article, e.g. *des Morgens, des Abends*, and these full phrases are still sometimes used in formal writing.

(d) A few other noun phrases in the genitive are used adverbially as fixed expressions

unverrichteter Dinge	*without achieving anything*
letzten Endes	after all
meines Erachtens (*abbrev.*: m.E.)	in my view
allen Ernstes	in all seriousness
stehenden Fußes (*lit.*)	immediately
gesenkten/erhobenen Hauptes	with one's head bowed/raised
leichten/schweren Herzens	with a light/heavy heart
Sie fährt erster Klasse	She is travelling first class
seines Weges gehen *(lit.*)	to go on one's way
meines Wissens (*abbrev.*: m.W.)	*to my knowledge*

(e) A few adjectives are used with the genitive case

A construction with *of* is a frequent English equivalent for these:

Er ist **einer solchen Tat** nicht fähig	*He is not capable of such a deed*

Further details of these adjectives are given in section **6.3.3**.

(f) The genitive case is used after a few prepositions

e.g. *innerhalb, statt, trotz, während, wegen*. Information about these is given in section **18.4**.

2.4 Genitive case or *von*?

Using the genitive case where appropriate is the norm in written German, and it is considered very much as a mark of 'best' style. However, it is less frequent in colloquial speech, except with names (e.g. *Ruths Buch*, *Peters Fahrrad*), and a prepositional phrase with *von* is often preferred, e.g.:

colloquial speech:	das Dach **vom Haus**, der Ring **von seiner Frau**
written German:	das Dach **des Hauses**, der Ring **seiner Frau**

Even in written German, though, there are contexts where the genitive is not possible and where the paraphrase with *von* **must** be used, and there are some other contexts where this paraphrase is considered an acceptable alternative to the genitive in writing. This section gives information about the contexts where the paraphrase with *von* must or can be used in written German. In other contexts it is typical of colloquial speech and avoided in writing.

2.4.1 Contexts in which a phrase with *von* must be used in writing

(a) if a noun stands by itself or is used with a word

which does not decline

i.e. with a determiner which has no ending or with a numeral

der Bau **von Kraftwerken**	*the building of power stations*
die Wirkung **von wenig Wein**	the effect of a little wine
der Preis **von fünf Fahrrädern**	the price of five bicycles
ein Strahl **von Hoffnung**	*a ray of hope*

(b) with a descriptive phrase

eine Frau **von bezaubernder Höflichkeit**	*a woman of enchanting politeness*
ein Ereignis **von weltgeschichtlicher Bedeutung**	*an event of global historical significance*

(c) with personal pronouns

The genitive forms of personal pronouns are rarely used, see **3.1.2**:

fünf **von euch**	*five of you*
ein Freund **von ihr**	*a friend of hers*

(d) in partitive constructions with *viel*, *wenig* and indefinite pronouns

viel/wenig **von dem**, was sie sagte	*much / little of what she said*
etwas **von ihrem Charme**	something of her charm
welches **von diesen Büchern** ?	which of those books?
nichts **von diesem Zauber**	*nothing of this magic*

2.4.2 Contexts in which a phrase with von may be used in writing

In these contexts it is equally acceptable to use a phrase with *von* or the genitive case in written German.

(a) to avoid consecutive genitive noun phrases in -(*e*)*s*

der Turm **von dem Palast** des Königs der Turm **des Palastes** des Königs	}	*the tower of the king's palace*

Consecutive genitive noun phrases are considered inelegant, especially if both nouns have the ending -*(e)s*, but they are not unknown, e.g.:

die Existenz **eines Verdachts eines Verstoßes** gegen den Atomsperrvertrag (*SZ*)	*the existence of a suspected violation of the nuclear weapons non-proliferation treaty*

(b) if a noun is qualified by an adjective with no article

der Bau **von modernen Kraftwerken** der Bau **moderner Kraftwerke**	}	*the building of modern power stations*

There is also a clear preference for a phrase with *von* in these contexts if the first noun is qualified by an indefinite article, e.g.:

ein fader Geruch **von aufgewärmten Speisen** (*Zweig*)	*an insipid smell of warmed-up food*

(c) with nouns qualified by indefinite pronouns

die Ansicht **von vielen Politikern** die Ansicht **vieler**	}	*the view of many politicians*

Politiker

(d) in most partitive constructions

i.e. following number words (except those listed at **2.4.1d**):

eines **von den wenigen alten Häusern** eines **der wenigen alten Häuser**	}	*one of the few old houses*
viele **von meinen Freunden** viele **meiner Freunde**	}	*many of my friends*
zwei **von ihren Kindern** zwei **ihrer Kinder**	}	*two of her children*

(e) With geographical names which have no article

die Zerstörung **von Dresden** die Zerstörung **Dresdens**	}	*the destruction of Dresden*
die Hauptstadt **von Deutschland** die Hauptstadt **Deutschlands**	}	*the capital of Germany*

In German, no preposition is used with geographical names, e.g. *die Stadt Leipzig*, *die Universität Freiburg*, see **2.6c**.

2.5 The dative case

The dative case has **the widest range of all the German cases**, with many idiomatic uses. It is used

- as the **indirect** or **sole object** of a verb (section **2.5.1**)
- as a '**free**' **dative** with other verbs (section **2.5.2**)
- to indicate **possession** (section **2.5.3**)
- with many **adjectives** (section **2.5.4**)
- after some **prepositions** (section **2.5.5**)

In all these contexts except after prepositions it typically marks a person or persons (rather than a thing) in some way concerned or affected, if not necessarily very directly, by the action or the event expressed in the verb.

2.5.1 The dative case as the object of a verb

(a) The dative case marks the indirect object of transitive verbs

The INDIRECT OBJECT typically indicates the person who is in receipt of the direct object of the verb, and it is a characteristic of verbs of giving and receiving or the like that they have an indirect as well as a direct object. In German such indirect objects are in the dative case, whereas in English the indirect object is marked by the word order or by a phrase introduced by *to*:

Ich zeigte **dem Polizisten** meinen Führerschein	*I showed* **the policeman** *my driving licence/ I showed my driving licence* **to the policeman**
Ich habe **meinem Freund** das Buch geliehen	*I have lent* **my friend** *the book/I have lent the book* **to my friend**

For more information about indirect objects see section **16.4.1**.

(b) Many verbs take a sole object in the dative case

These are intransitive verbs which cannot be followed by a direct object in the accusative case, but only by a dative object. The English equivalents are most often simple transitive verbs, e.g.:

Er dankte **seiner Tante** für ihre Hilfe	*He thanked* **his aunt** *for her help*
Der Einbrecher hat **dem alten Mann** mit einer Pistole gedroht	*The burglar threatened* **the old man** *with a pistol*

Further verbs like this are *dienen*, *folgen*, *gratulieren*, *helfen* and *schmeicheln*. More information about them is given in section **16.4.2**.

2.5.2 'Free' datives

The dative case is often used to mark a person (rarely a thing) affected in some way by the action or event expressed by the verb, especially with verbs which denote an activity, in particular moving and making things, or which indicate a change of state. These uses of the dative case are often referred to as '**free**' **datives**. However, the difference between some of these uses and the typical dative objects dealt with in **2.5.1** is by no means clear-cut, except that the dative case with these verbs is rarely a grammatical requirement.

Various types of 'free' datives have been identified, but there are certain similarities between them all (and between them and the possessive dative, see **2.5.3**). Some are idiomatic and lack a clear equivalent in English.

(a) The dative case can indicate a person on whose behalf the action is done

(i) This is sometimes called the '**dative of advantage**' or the '**benefactive**' **dative**. It often corresponds to an English phrase with 'for':

Sie schrieb **mir** seine Adresse	*She wrote his address down for*

auf	*me*
Ich habe **ihr** die Tür geöffnet	*I opened the door for her*
Er füllte **meinem Vater** das Glas	*He filled the glass for my father/ my father's glass*

(ii) It is sometimes used with things, especially things being altered, repaired or improved:

Sie setzt **dem Auto** einen neuen Motor ein	*She's putting a new engine in the car*

(iii) In this 'benefactive' sense a dative reflexive pronoun can be used if a physical action is involved. This is very frequent in everyday speech:

Ich will **mir** das Buch anschauen	*I want to go and look at that book*

(iv) In many of these contexts a phrase with *für* can be used rather than the dative case:

Er will **mir** Blumen/Blumen **für mich** kaufen	*He's going to buy some flowers for me*
Ich habe **ihr** die Tür/die Tür **für sie** geöffnet	*I opened the door for her*

The construction with *für* may be preferred if the dative is ambiguous. For instance, *Er hat* **seinem Vater** einen Brief geschrieben could mean 'to his father' or 'for his father', whereas *Er hat* **für seinen Vater** einen Brief geschrieben is quite clear.

(b) The dative case can indicate a person who is disadvantaged by the action

This '**dative of disadvantage**' characteristically indicates a person who is affected by something undesirable happening to the person or thing which is the subject or direct object of the verb:

Mir ist Großmutters Vase kaputtgegangen	*Grandmother's vase broke on me*

(c) The dative case can mark a person from whose standpoint an action is being judged

This usage typically involves an adjective qualified by *zu* or *genug*:

Mir verging die Zeit zu schnell Fährt sie **dir** schnell genug?	*I felt that the time was passing too quickly* *Is she driving fast enough for you?*

A similar dative of the person concerned is frequent with the verb *sein* and a noun. In such cases, English uses a phrase with 'to' or 'for':

Das Wiedersehen mit dir war **mir** ein Vergnügen	*It was a pleasure for me to see you again*
Dem Schüler war diese Zensur ein Trost	*This mark was a consolation to / for the schoolboy*

(d) The so-called 'ethic dative' indicates the speaker's emotional involvement

It is only found with the first person, in commands or exclamations:

Dann soll **mir** mal so einer vorbeikommen! Seid **mir** doch nett!	*Just let me catch one like that coming past!* *Be nice, for my sake!*

2.5.3 The dative of possession

(a) The dative case is often used to indicate possession

This is especially frequent with **parts of the body** or **articles of clothing**, but it is also found with close relatives and prized possessions (like vehicles or houses). The definite article is used rather than a possessive determiner (see **4.6**), and the dative typically comes before the item possessed:

Einem Mann ist das Bein gebrochen worden (*FR*)	*One man's leg was broken*
Mir muss der Mund offen geblieben sein (*Borst*)	My mouth must have hung open
Dem Alten ist gerade die Frau gestorben	The old man's wife has just died
Das Kind ist **mir** vors Auto gelaufen	*The child ran in front of my car*

If the possessor is the subject of the sentence, a reflexive pronoun in the dative case is used. This may be optional if no ambiguity is involved about who the item in question belongs to:

Er wischte **sich** den Schweiß von der Stirn	*He wiped the sweat from his brow*
Willst du (**dir**) den grünen Pullover anziehen?	*Are you going to put your green pullover on?*

There is some variation in the use of the possessive dative, but the following guidelines apply:

(i) It is not used if no-one else could possibly do it to one or for one:

Er machte die Augen auf	*He opened his eyes*
Sie hob den Arm	*She raised her arm*
Er nickte mit dem Kopf	*He nodded his head*

(ii) It **must** be used if the body part or article of clothing is used with a preposition (other than *mit*):

Ich habe **mir** in den Finger geschnitten	*I've cut my finger*
	The cap fell off my head

Die Mütze fiel **mir** vom Kopf	*Rain was falling on my hat*
Regen tropfte **mir** auf den Hut	

(iii) It **must** be used if reference is not to the subject of the sentence:

Die Mutter wäscht **ihm** die Hände	*His mother is washing his hands*
Wir zogen **dem Verletzten** die Hose aus	*We took the injured man's trousers off*

(b) Differences between using the dative and a possessive construction

Possession can also be indicated by using a genitive phrase or a possessive determiner like *sein* or *mein*, but if the dative is used rather than a possessive construction, the person is seen as affected by the action as well. Compare:

Regen tropfte **ihm auf den Hut**	*(he was wearing it and getting wet)*
Regen tropfte **auf seinen Hut**	(he wasn't necessarily wearing it)
Sie strich **dem Jungen übers Gesicht**	(normal for: 'she ran her hand over the boy's face')
Sie strich **über das Gesicht des Jungen**	(only possible if the boy is dead or unconscious)
Er zog **ihr die** Jacke an	He helped her on with her jacket
Er zog **sich ihre** Jacke an	*He put her jacket on*

(c) The use of the accusative or the dative to indicate possession of parts of the body

With some verbs the accusative case is an alternative to the dative case to indicate possession of parts of the body. If the accusative is used, the whole person is seen as more directly affected:

Der Hund biss **ihm/ihn** ins Bein Ich klopfte **ihm/ihn** auf die Schulter
Alle Glieder schmerzten **ihm/ihn**

With the following verbs, the accusative and dative are equally common:

beißen küssen schmerzen stechen stoßen zwicken

With these the accusative is possible, but the dative is more common:

hauen klopfen schießen schlagen schneiden treten

(d) In colloquial speech a phrase in the dative case is often used to indicate possession

This construction is very widespread in everyday speech, but it is heavily stigmatized as non-standard. It can only be used if the possessor is a person:

Das ist **meiner Mutter** ihr Hut
Meinem Onkel sein Garten ist ganz groß
Dem Huck Finn sein Vater
(*Andersch*)

That's my mother's hat
My uncle's garden is quite big
Huck Finn's father

2.5.4 Other uses of the dative case

(a) The dative case is often used with noun phrases which depend on adjectives

e.g. *Er ist* **seinem Bruder** sehr ähnlich. The dative is the most common case used with adjectives, and full details are given in section **6.3.1**.

(b) Adjectives with *zu* or *genug* may govern a dative

case or a phrase with *für*

A phrase with *für* can come before **or** after the adjective, but the dative always precedes it:

Diese Uhr ist **mir** zu teuer/ **für mich** zu teuer/zu teuer **für mich**	*That watch is too expensive for me*
Dieser Mantel ist **mir** nicht warm genug/ **für mich** nicht warm genug/nicht warm genug **für mich**	*That coat is not warm enough for me*

(c) The dative case with *sein* and *werden* and adjectives expressing sensations

With a number of adjectives which express a sensation used with the verbs *sein* and *werden*, German typically puts the person who is experiencing the sensation into the dative case in an impersonal construction. In English the person is typically the subject of the verb:

Es ist **mir** kalt/ **Mir** ist kalt	*I am cold*
Ist **dir** warm genug?	Are you warm enough?
Ihm wurde plötzlich schwindlig	*He suddenly felt dizzy*

For the omission of *es*, see **16.2.4e**. This construction is used with the following adjectives:

bange	heiß	schlecht	übel	(un)wohl
gut	kalt	schwindlig	warm	

English learners need to be aware that *Ich bin kalt* or *Ich bin warm*, etc. are **never** used to mean 'I am cold' or 'I am warm', etc. Indeed, they can sometimes have a quite different meaning, so that, for example, in colloquial speech, *Er ist warm* commonly means 'He is gay'.

(d) The dative case is used with a number of

prepositions

Information about these is given in sections **18.2** and **18.3**.

2.6 Apposition

A noun phrase is said to be '**in apposition**' to another noun phrase if it immediately follows and gives some additional information about it, e.g.:

> Wilhelm, **der letzte deutsche Kaiser**
>
> Berlin, **die Hauptstadt der Bundesrepublik Deutschland**

Comparative phrases introduced by *als* and *wie* are also normally 'in apposition' to the noun they qualify, and the rules given below apply to them as well:

> ein Tag **wie jeder andere** Er gilt **als großer Staatsmann** Jürgen ist größer **als du**

Apposition in measurement phrases is dealt with in section **2.7**.

(a) Noun phrases in apposition have the same case as the noun which they describe

Es spricht Herbert Werner, **der Vorsitzende des Vereins**	*The speaker is Herbert Werner, the chairman of the society*
in Michelstadt, **einem kleinen Städtchen im Odenwald**	in Michelstadt, a little town in the Odenwald
6,8 Prozent der Frauen empfinden die Arbeitslosigkeit als **einen Makel** (*LV*)	6.8% of women feel that being unemployed is a stigma
der „Mythos der Schweiz" als **eines**	The 'myth of Switzerland' as a country with four national

Landes mit vier Landessprachen (*NZZ*)	languages
für Heinrich Böll als **gläubigen Katholiken**	for Heinrich Böll as a devout Catholic
nach einem Tag wie **diesem**	*after a day like this*

(b) There are some exceptions to this general rule

The rule that noun phrases in apposition are in the same case is generally followed in both spoken and written German. However, a few exceptions are common:

(i) After a genitive, an noun in apposition with no determiner or adjective is usually in the nominative:

nach dem Tod meines Onkels, **Bürgermeister** der Stadt Krefeld	*after the death of my uncle, the mayor of the town of Krefeld*

(ii) In dates a weekday introduced by *am* may be followed by the date in the dative **or** the accusative:

am Montag, **dem** 7. September 2015 *or* am Montag, **den** 7. September 2015

(iii) If the phrase in apposition has an adjective, but no determiner, then the nominative can be used:

Sie informierte auch Uwe Rösler, **Technischen Direktor** / **Technischer Direktor** des Betriebs

In practice, the nominative occasionally occurs in other contexts, as a kind of neutral possibility.

(iv) The dative is sometimes used instead of other cases:

nach dem Tod meines Onkels, **dem früheren Bürgermeister dieser Stadt**

die Wirtsleute des „Birnbaumes“, **einem kleinen Dorfhaus** (*BZ*)

Der Präsident begrüßte Walter Keller, **dem Minister** für Entwicklungshilfe

However, this use of the dative in such contexts is not generally accepted as standard.

(v) The genitive case is regularly used after a phrase with *von*:

Sacramento ist die Hauptstadt von Kalifornien, **des reichsten Bundesstaates**

(c) German often uses appositional constructions with geographical names

die Insel Rügen	die Universität Hamburg	die Stadt Bremen

In constructions like these, English typically uses ‘of’, e.g. ‘the University **of** Hamburg’, ‘the city of Bremen’, etc.

With names of battles, German uses *bei* for English *of*, e.g. *die Schlacht bei Lützen* ‘the battle of Lützen’.

2.7 Measurement phrases: genitive, von or apposition?

There is much variation and uncertainty in respect of case usage in measurement phrases, and this section gives detail on the most frequent accepted or widely used alternatives. For the use of singular nouns in measurement phrases, e.g. *zwei Pfund Kirschen*, see **1.2.8**.

2.7.1 Noun phrases after a noun of measurement

(a) A noun phrase after a noun of measurement is normally treated as being in apposition to it

i.e. it is put in the same case (see **2.6**):

eine Flasche **Wein**	*a bottle of wine*
eine Flasche **deutscher Wein**	a bottle of German wine
er kauft zwei Flaschen **deutschen Wein**	he is buying two bottles of German wine
mit einer Tasse **heißem Tee**	with a cup of hot tea
von vier Kilo **grünen Erbsen**	*of four kilograms of green peas*

In spoken German it is not uncommon to hear datives for accusatives and vice versa, e.g. *Er kauft zwei Flaschen deutschem Wein, mit einer Tasse heißen Tee.* This is considered incorrect in writing.

(b) The genitive case is sometimes used in measurement phrases

eine Flasche sommerabendlichen Dufts (*Süßkind*)	*a bottle of the perfume of a summer evening*
zehn Jahre treuer Mitarbeit	*ten years' faithful service*

This alternative **only** occurs in the sequence: noun of measurement + adjective + noun. In the masculine and neuter singular it sounds rather literary and is restricted to formal writing, but it is not uncommon in the plural in spoken German.

(c) Usage when the noun of measurement is in the dative case

Here usage is particularly uncertain and variable, and the following

alternatives are current and equally acceptable:

(i) After nouns of measurement in -*er*, e.g. *Zentner* 'hundredweight', *Liter*, *Meter*, etc., the dative plural ending -*n* can be attached to these rather than to the following noun:

mit zwei Zentner **n** Äpfel *or* mit zwei Zentner Äpfel **n**

(ii) If the following noun is plural, it can be in the dative or the nominative, i.e. it may lack the ending -*n* of the dative plural:

mit einem Haufen **Butterbrote(n)**	*with a pile of sandwiches*
mit einem Dutzend **Kühe(n)**	*with a dozen cows*

(iii) If the following noun has an adjective with it there is a range of acceptable possibilities.

If the following noun is singular, it can have the 'weak' adjective ending -*en* **or** the 'strong' ending -*em*:

von einem Pfund **gekochten** Schinken von einem Pfund **gekochtem** Schinken	}	*of a pound of cooked ham*

If the following noun is plural, it can be in the genitive. This means that all three of the following alternatives are acceptable:

mit einem Strauß rote Rosen (*nominative*)

mit einem Strauß roten Rosen (*dative*)

mit einem Strauß roter Rosen (*genitive*)

(d) Usage in contexts where the noun of measurement is in the genitive case

In these contexts a phrase with *von* is **always** used, e.g.:

der Preis **von einem Pfund gekochtem/gekochten Schinken**

in order to avoid consecutive genitives in *- (e)s*, i.e. *der Preis* **eines Pfundes gekochten Schinkens**.

2.7.2 Noun phrases after words of rather vague quantity

e.g. *die Anzahl, die Gruppe, der Haufen, die Schar, die Reihe, die Sorte.* Usage with these varies according to whether the following noun has an adjective with it.

(a) If the following noun has an adjective with it (or is an adjective used as a noun)

Here the following noun is most often in the genitive case in written German, but a phrase with *von* may be used (as it almost always is in speech):

zwei Gruppen **junger Arbeiter**	*or* zwei Gruppen **von jungen Arbeitern**
große Mengen **neuer Autos**	*or* große Mengen **von neuen Autos**
eine Reihe **ernsthafter Probleme**	*or* eine Reihe **von ernsthaften Problemen**
die wachsende Anzahl **Asylsuchender**	*or* die wachsende Anzahl **von Asylsuchenden**

(b) If these words are followed by a single noun

Normal usage is a phrase with *von*, although apposition is also possible:

eine Art **(von) Museum** eine Anzahl **(von) Touristen**

eine große Menge **(von) Handys**

2.7.3 Noun phrases after nouns of number

i.e. *das Dutzend, das Hundert, das Tausend, die Million, die Milliarde*. If these are used in the plural without a preceding numeral, they are followed by a phrase with *von*:

Dutzende **von Anfragen**	Tausende **von Briten**	Millionen **von Menschen**

If the following noun has an adjective with it, all three alternatives are acceptable, i.e. they can be followed by any of:

a phrase with *von*: Tausende/tausende **von jungen Arbeitern**

a phrase in the genitive case: Tausende/tausende **junger Arbeiter**

a phrase in apposition: Tausende/tausende **junge Arbeiter**

In such contexts, *Dutzend*, *Hundert* and *Tausend* can be spelled with an initial capital **or** a small letter, see **8.1.5c**.

If they are used in the singular **or** the plural with a numeral, the following noun is usually in apposition, less commonly in the genitive:

zwei Millionen **hungernde(r) Menschen**	*two million starving people*
ein Dutzend **Eier**	a dozen eggs
Allein im Bahnhof kam es im Februar zu mehr als einem Dutzend **Taschendiebstählen** (*MM*)	*Just in the station there were more than a dozen pickpocket thefts in February*

Personal pronouns

PRONOUNS are a limited ('closed') set of small words which stand in place of NOUNS or NOUN PHRASES. In particular they stand for nouns or noun phrases which have already been mentioned or which are so well known to the speaker and the listener that they do not need to be repeated in full. Pronouns are used in the same grammatical contexts as nouns or noun phrases and thus, in German, they change their form to indicate the same grammatical categories as nouns, i.e. CASE, NUMBER and GENDER.

There are a number of different types of pronoun, and most of them are treated in **Chapter 5**. This chapter explains the forms and uses of the PERSONAL PRONOUNS, i.e. those which refer to:

- the speaker(s), i.e. English *I* and *we* – the FIRST PERSON
- the person(s) addressed, i.e. English *you* – the SECOND PERSON
- other person(s) or thing(s) mentioned, i.e. English *he*, *she*, *it* and *they* – the THIRD PERSON

The personal pronouns have different forms to show plural, case and, in the third person, gender. These forms are given in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1 Personal pronouns

Person			Nominative		Accusative	Genitive	Dative
Singular	1st		ich	*I*	mich	meiner	mir
	2nd		du	*you*	dich	deiner	dir
	3rd	masculine	er	*he/it*	ihn	seiner	ihm
		feminine	sie	*she/it*	sie	ihrer	ihr
		neuter	es	*it*	es	seiner	ihm
Plural	1st		wir	*we*	uns	unser	uns
	2nd	familiar	ihr	*you*	euch	euer	euch
		polite (sg./pl.)	Sie	*you*	Sie	Ihrer	Ihnen
	3rd		sie	*they*	sie	ihrer	ihnen

This chapter gives information on:

- the forms of the **personal pronouns** (section **3.1**)
- **reflexive** and **reciprocal pronouns** (section **3.2**)
- the use of the **second person pronouns *du***, ***ihr*** and ***Sie*** (section **3.3**)
- the uses of the **third person pronouns** (section **3.4**)
- the **prepositional adverb** (section **3.5**)
- special uses of the **pronoun *es*** (section **3.6**)

3.1 The forms of the personal pronouns

3.1.1 The declension of the personal pronouns

The forms of the personal pronouns given in Table 3.1 are those which are the norm in writing. However, there are a number of frequent variations in everyday speech.

(a) In everyday speech reduced forms are usual

Personal pronouns are naturally weakly stressed, so that in casual speech they tend to be very heavily reduced, e.g.:

'ch soll **'s'm** geben *for* **Ich** soll **es ihm** geben

Jetzt kannst **e'n** sehen	*for*	Jetzt kannst **du ihn** sehen

Particularly frequent are contractions with the common verbs *sein* and *haben*, e.g. *hammer?* for *haben wir?*; see also **10.2.2a**. This kind of reduction is hardly ever seen in written German, with the exception of *'s* for *es*, which is quite common in written dialogue and poetry.

(b) In casual rapid speech, the subject pronouns *ich*, *du* and *es* are often omitted entirely

Such omissions are only very occasionally seen in written German, to represent colloquial dialogue.

(Ich) weiß's nicht	Kannst (du) morgen kommen?	(Es) scheint zu klappen

(c) In South Germany *mir* is commonly heard for *wir*

This is a non-standard regionalism but it is almost universal in everyday speech in the South.

Mir gehen jetzt ins Kino	*for*	**Wir** gehen jetzt ins Kino

3.1.2 The genitive of the personal pronouns

(a) The genitive forms of the personal pronouns are only used in very formal registers

mittels einer Passbildaufnahme	*by means of a passport photograph*
seiner selbst (*Grass*)	*of himself*
Ist die Politik erst einmal auf die	*If politics is moved onto the streets,*

Straße verlegt, dann wird sich die Straße **ihrer** annehmen (*OH*)	*the streets will take it over*

Even in writing, these forms can sound stilted, and alternative constructions are often preferred:

(i) With verbs, an alternative construction or a different verb can be used (for further information, see **16.7**):

Erinnern Sie sich **an mich** (*rarely:* meiner)

Er braucht mich nicht (*rarely:* Er bedarf meiner nicht)

(ii) After prepositions (see **18.4**) the dative case is used in speech:

wegen **uns**, trotz **ihnen**, statt **ihm** (*or* an seiner Stelle)

The dative is also not uncommon in writing, although formal standard German still prefers the genitive. To refer to things, the adverbs *stattdessen*, *trotzdem*, *währenddessen* and *deswegen* are used rather than the preposition with a pronoun.

(iii) After the prepositions which have alternative constructions with *von* (see **18.4.3b**) the prepositional adverb *davon* (see **3.5**) is used rather than a pronoun in the genitive, e.g. *innerhalb davon, unweit davon*. Alternatively, the prepositions may be used on their own, as adverbs: *außerhalb* 'outside (it)', *jenseits* 'on the other side (of it)'.

(iv) In other contexts, *von* is used (see **2.4.1c**):

sechs **von ihnen**, drei **von euch**, ein Freund **von mir**

(b) The genitive personal pronouns usually only refer to persons or animals

Ich bedarf **seiner** nicht	*I don't need him*

The demonstratives *dessen* or *deren* are used to refer to things:

Ich bedarf **dessen** nicht	*I don't need it*

Nevertheless, this usage is not absolutely fixed, and personal pronouns are occasionally used to refer to things:

Er lässt seinen Autoschlüssel im Küchenschrank, so dass andere Familienmitglieder sich **seiner** bedienen können (*MM*)	*He leaves his car key in the kitchen cupboard so that other members of the family can use it*

(c) Genitive personal pronouns with *wegen*, *um* … *willen* and - *halben*

Special forms of the genitive personal pronoun are used with these prepositions, and compounded with an intervening *t*, e.g.:

meinet wegen, **deinet** wegen, um **ihret** willen, um **unsert** willen, **seinet** halben

(d) The genitive forms *mein*, *dein* and *sein* are archaic

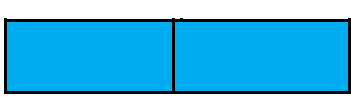
They have been replaced in modern German by *meiner*, *deiner* and *seiner*, but they are sometimes still used for stylistic effect:

Man gedachte **sein** (*for:* seiner) nicht mehr

3.2 Reflexive and reciprocal pronouns

3.2.1 Forms of the reflexive pronoun

Table 3.2 The reflexive pronoun



	Accusative		Dative	
ich setze	**mich**	ich bilde	**mir**	das ein
du setzt	**dich**	du bildest	**dir**	das ein
er/sie/es setzt	**sich**	er/sie/es bildet	**sich**	das ein
wir setzen	**uns**	wir bilden	**uns**	das ein
ihr setzt	**euch**	ihr bildet	**euch**	das ein
Sie setzen	**sich**	Sie bilden	**sich**	das ein
sie setzen	**sich**	sie bilden	**sich**	das ein
setz	**dich!**	bilde	**dir**	das ein!
setzt	**euch!**	bildet	**euch**	das ein!
setzen Sie	**sich!**	bilden Sie	**sich**	das ein!

The REFLEXIVE PRONOUN is a personal pronoun which refers back to the subject of the sentence or clause, e.g. *Ich wasche* ***mich*** 'I wash myself', *Sie wäscht* ***sich*** 'She washes herself'. In German it has a special form ***sich*** which is used in the accusative and dative cases for the third person (singular and plural), and for the 'polite' second person. In the first and second persons, the personal pronouns given in Table 3.1 are used as reflexive pronouns.

The German reflexive pronoun is much more frequent than English forms in - ***self***, in particular with certain verbs which are mainly used with a reflexive pronoun – the so-called REFLEXIVE VERBS (see **16.3.5** and **16.4.3**). Table 3.2 gives the forms of the reflexive pronoun with the present tense and the imperative of two 'reflexive' verbs, ***sich setzen*** 'sit down' and **sich (das) einbilden** ' imagine (that)'. This shows the reflexive pronoun in the accusative and dative cases.

3.2.2 Uses of the reflexive pronoun

(a) The reflexive pronoun used after a preposition refers back to the subject of the verb

Er hatte kein Geld bei **sich** *He had no money on him*

Sie schlossen die Tür hinter **sich**	*They closed the door behind them*

The reflexive pronoun can also refer back to a dative object denoting a person with verbs whose dative object is the equivalent of an English subject (see **16.2.4d**):

Ihm gefallen Geschichten über sich	*He likes stories about himself*

(b) The reflexive pronoun in infinitive constructions without *zu*

In these contexts it may not always be clear who the reflexive pronoun refers to. However, it usually refers back to the DIRECT OBJECT of the finite verb:

Er hörte seinen Freund **sich** tadeln	*He heard his friend blaming himself*
Er ließ den Gefangenen **sich** ausziehen	*He made the prisoner get undressed*

On the other hand, a non-reflexive pronoun refers back to the SUBJECT of the finite verb:

Er hörte seinen Freund **ihn** tadeln	*He heard his friend blaming him*
Er ließ den Gefangenen **ihn** ausziehen	*He made the prisoner undress him*

After a preposition a reflexive pronoun also refers back to the **subject** of the finite verb:

Peter sah eine dunkle Gestalt **vor sich** auftauchen	*Peter saw a dark shape appear in front of him*
Eva ließ mich **bei sich** wohnen	*Eva let me live at her place*

(c) The use of the reflexive pronoun in infinitive clauses with *zu*

In these the choice of pronoun depends on who is understood to be the SUBJECT of the infinitive (see **11.2.3**):

Karl versprach Peter, **sich** zu entschuldigen	(Karl is the one to apologize)
Karl versprach Peter, **ihn** zu entschuldigen	(Karl is excusing Peter)
Karl bat Peter, **sich** zu entschuldigen	(Peter should apologize)
Karl bat Peter, **ihn** zu entschuldigen	(Peter is asked to excuse Karl)

(d) The use of *selbst* and *selber*

Selbst or *selber* can be used in conjunction with a personal pronoun as the equivalent of emphatic 'myself', 'yourself', etc. The distinction between them is stylistic, in that *selbst* tends to be preferred in more formal registers, whilst *selber* is more typical of colloquial usage. They are always stressed:

Ich habe **selbst/selber** mit dem Minister darüber gesprochen	*I spoke to the minister about it myself*
Er hat **selbst/selber** den Brief geschrieben	*He wrote the letter himself*

Unstressed *selbst* has the meaning 'even' and always precedes the pronoun (or noun) which it qualifies, e.g. ***Selbst er*** *hat den Brief gelesen.*

(e) The genitive pronoun is sometimes used reflexively in formal written German

It occurs most often in conjunction with certain adjectives (see **6.3.3**). To avoid ambiguity, it is always used with *selbst*:

Er ist **seiner selbst** sicher	*He is sure of himself*
Sie war **ihrer selbst** nicht mehr	*She had lost control of herself*

mächtig

3.2.3 Reciprocal pronouns

RECIPROCAL PRONOUN S are used to refer to two (or more) people, like English 'each other'. For these, German can use either the reflexive pronoun ***sich*** or ***einander***. *Einander* is less common in speech than in writing, but it is the only possible alternative after prepositions, when it is written together with the preposition, e.g. *durcheinander*, *miteinander*:

Sie sahen **sich** (*or* **einander**) oft	*They often saw each other*
Wir gehen **uns** (*or* **einander**) aus dem Wege	We avoid each other
	We rely on each other
Wir verlassen **uns aufeinander**	They were talking about each other
Sie sprachen **voneinander** *but* Sie sprachen von **sich**	*They were talking about themselves*

If the reflexive pronoun is ambiguous, *selbst* can be added to confirm that the sense is reflexive, or *gegenseitig* to show that it is reciprocal:

Sie widersprachen **sich selbst**	*They contradicted themselves*
Sie widersprachen **sich gegenseitig** (*or* Sie widersprachen **einander**)	*They contradicted each other*

3.3 Pronouns of address

English only has a single **second person pronoun** '**you**', but like most other European languages **German makes a distinction** between FAMILIAR and POLITE pronouns, i.e. on the one hand singular *du* and plural *ihr*, and on the other *Sie*, which is used for both singular and plural.

Since the loss of the old form *thou*, English has lacked any distinction of this kind, and English-speaking learners of German need to establish

which is appropriate in context. The use of these pronouns is anchored in social convention, and it is important for English learners to realize that these conventions can be very different from those in the English-speaking world. Since the late 1960s the use of *du* and *Sie* (commonly referred to as *duzen* and *siezen*) has shifted with changing social attitudes, and the use of *du* has become more widespread, particularly among younger people. However, these changes have created considerable uncertainty, and Germans nowadays can often feel insecure about which one to use in unfamiliar surroundings or with new acquaintances. However, **consciousness of the need to use the 'right' pronoun is still very strong**.

Essentially, ***du* signals intimacy, affection and solidarity**. People who use *du* to one another are conscious of belonging to the same group or standing together, whereas ***Sie* signals a degree of social distance and, perhaps above all, respect** (rather than just 'politeness'). Thus, in the 'wrong' situation *du* sounds disrespectful, intrusive of personal privacy and even offensive, and in extreme cases it can be such a gross insult that people have been prosecuted for using it (notably to policemen). On the other hand, *Sie* in the 'wrong' situation sounds stand-offish or pompous.

Outside school or university, when talking to fellow pupils or fellow students (where the use of *du* is universal), non-native speakers are advised to let native speakers take the initiative in proposing the use of *du*. It is very important for English speakers to be aware that the use of *du* (and first names) is still much less frequent or acceptable between adults than is the use of first names in the English-speaking countries, especially between colleagues at work and casual acquaintances. It has a quite different social meaning to the use of first names in English and can be interpreted as indicating a lack of respect rather than friendliness, especially from younger to older people.

3.3.1 The uses of du, ihr and Sie

(a) *du* is used

> (i) when speaking to children (up to about the age of 14 – in schools to the 10th class), to animals and inanimate objects, to oneself and to God.
> (ii) between relatives and close friends, between schoolchildren and students, predominantly between blue-collar workmates, between non-commissioned soldiers and between members of clubs, interest groups and (especially left-wing) political parties.

Unlike some other languages with similar distinctions in the use of second person pronouns, **the use of *du* or *Sie* is always reciprocal**, i.e. there are no longer any circumstances in which one adult would normally use *du* to another and the other would use *Sie* back to them. And using *du* to another adult one has just met is normally considered quite rude.

(b) *ihr* is the plural of *du*

i.e. it is used to address two or more people whom the speaker would individually address with *du*.

However, as *ihr* is unambiguously plural, whereas *Sie* can be singular or plural, it is sometimes used to address a group, even if one would not use *du* with every single one of them, e.g. (at work):

> Ich wollte **euch** doch alle zum Kaffee einladen

Occasionally, *ihr* may be used to address any group to stress plurality, even if the speaker would normally address all of them individually as *Sie*. In this way, *ihr* can sometimes function as a kind of neutral compromise to mask the speaker's uncertainty about whether to use *du* or *Sie*.

(c) *Sie* is used in all other cases

It is used especially to adult strangers and generally in middle-class professions (e.g. to colleagues in an office, a shop, or a bank).

Usually, the use of *du* is linked to that of first names, that of *Sie* to formal titles (*Herr Engel*, *Frau Kallmeyer*, etc.). However, the use of *Sie* and first names (so-called 'Hamburger Siezen' or 'Hanseatisches Siezen') is not uncommon, especially from adults to older teenagers and in 'trendy' circles. In the latter case this may possibly be in imitation of the American use of first names, although there is also a tendency to use *du* on television chatshows and the like to give an impression of familiarity which is at variance with usage outside such artificial situations.

(d) *du* and *ihr* may be spelled with initial capitals in letter-writing

This applies to all the various forms of these pronouns, e.g. *Du* and *Ihr* as well as *Dich*, *Dein*, *Euch*, etc., e.g. *Ich danke Dir recht herzlich für Deinen Brief*. This is optional, and the forms may also be spelled with a small initial letter, e.g. *Ich danke dir recht herzlich für deinen Brief*.

The first spelling reform of 1996 prescribed that capitals should no longer be used with these pronouns. However, this ruling was almost universally ignored and subsequent revisions of the reform have permitted the use of capitals again, as an alternative, see **21.2.3**.

3.3.2 Other forms of address

(a) Titles are often used in shops, restaurants, etc. to address customers

Was wünscht **der Herr** ?

Was möchten **die Herrschaften** zu Mittag essen?

The use of singular titles of rank with a plural verb (e.g. *Was wünschen gnädige Frau, Herr Major?*) used to be the norm, but it is now archaic or facetious.

(b) The use of *Er* and *Sie* as pronouns of address

In older German the singular pronouns *Er* and *Sie* (spelled with capitals) were used to address people of a lower social standing. This usage persisted into the early twentieth century, but it is now obsolete (except facetiously).

3.4 Third person pronouns

3.4.1 The gender of third person singular pronouns

The third person singular pronouns have distinct forms for each gender, i.e. **masculine *er***, **feminine *sie*** and **neuter *es***. Since they take their gender from the noun they refer to, this means that ***er***, ***sie*** or ***es*** **can all correspond to English *it* when referring to things**:

Dein **Bleistift** ? Ach, **er** lag vorhin auf dem Tisch, aber ich muss **ihn** jetzt verloren haben	*Your pencil? Oh,* **it** *was lying on the table a little while ago, but I must have lost* **it** *now*
Er hörte meine **Meinung** und stimmte **ihr** bei	*He heard my opinion and agreed with* **it**
Darf ich Ihr **Buch** noch eine Woche behalten? Ich habe **es** noch nicht gelesen	*May I keep your book another week? I haven't read* **it** *yet*

Possible conflicts between grammatical and natural gender in the agreement of the pronoun are explained in **1.1.12**.

3.4.2 The use of demonstrative rather than third person

pronouns

In informal colloquial speech, forms of the demonstrative pronoun *der* (see **5.1.1**) are often used rather than a third person personal pronoun:

Der kommt wohl nicht mehr	*for*	**Er** kommt wohl nicht mehr
Ich hätt' **die** kaum wieder erkannt	*for*	Ich hätte **sie** kaum wieder erkannt

This is very common in spoken German, but it is only considered acceptable in writing to refer to things. However, it can be used if there is a possible ambiguity or a need for emphasis:

Es gibt Konflikte, wenn zum Beispiel ein Mountainbiker von hinten an Wanderer heranfährt und **die** sich erschrecken (*Spiegel*)	*There are conflicts, for example if a mountain biker rides up to some hikers from behind and they get a shock*

diese (see **5.1.2**), would be a possible alternative to *die* in a context like this.

3.4.3 Third person pronouns in comparative clauses

Third person pronouns are used in comparative clauses with *wie* (agreeing in gender and number with the relevant noun). This makes it absolutely clear what is being compared:

Das waren Reichtümer, wie **sie** Fürsten nicht besaßen (*Süßkind*)	*These were riches such as princes did not possess*
ein Stadtteil, wie **ihn** jede Großstadt kennt (*Spiegel*)	a district such as is to be found in any big city
Ein Kuchen, wie **ihn** deine Mutter backt, ist was Besonderes	*A cake like your mother makes is something special*

3.5 The prepositional adverb

The PREPOSITIONAL ADVERB (sometimes called the PRONOMINAL ADVERB) is formed by prefixing *da(r)* to a preposition, e.g.:

da mit ***da*** *von* ***dar*** *an* ***dar*** *über*

3.5.1 The use of the prepositional adverb instead of a pronoun

The prepositional adverb is often used rather than a preposition followed by a third person pronoun.

The general rule is that the **personal pronoun** is used with a preposition when referring to **people**, whereas the **prepositional adverb** is used when referring to **things**. Compare:

Ich spiele **mit ihr** (i.e. mit meiner Schwester)

Ich spiele **damit** (i.e. mit der Puppe)

There are some variations, however, and modern usage is broadly as follows:

(a) The pronoun *es* is not normally used after prepositions

Here the prepositional adverb is the norm:

Da steht mein neues Auto. Ich habe lange **darauf** (not *auf es*) warten müssen	*There's my new car. I had to wait a long time for it*

(b) The personal pronoun is always used after a preposition to refer to individual persons

(but **not** groups of people, see **(d)** below):

Du darfst nicht **mit ihr** spielen	*You mustn't play with her*
Ich kann mich nicht **an ihn** erinnern	*I can't remember him*

(c) To refer to a specific thing (or things)

In this context, either preposition plus pronoun *or* the prepositional adverb can be used:

Ich habe diese Geschirrspülmaschine seit drei Wochen und bin sehr zufrieden **damit/mit ihr**	*I've had this dishwasher for three weeks and I'm very satisfied with it*

In practice, the prepositional adverb is more frequent. If the combination of preposition plus pronoun is used, it emphasizes the thing referred to more strongly.

(d) The prepositional adverb is used to refer to abstracts and to groups of people

In particular, *darunter* and *davon* (i.e. 'among whom' or 'of whom') are very often used to refer to groups of people.

Wie findest du den Vorschlag? Bist du **damit** einverstanden?	*What do you think of the suggestion? Do you agree with it?*
Ich erwarte zehn Gäste, **darunter** einige sehr alte Bekannte	I am expecting ten guests, among them some very old acquaintances
Die meisten **davon** wollten keinen Ärger machen	*Most of them didn't want to cause trouble*

(e) The prepositional adverb is always used to refer to whole sentences

Seine Frau hat eine neue Stelle gekriegt. **Darüber** freut er sich sehr	*His wife's got a new job. He's very pleased about it*

(f) If motion is involved, a separable verb prefix with *hin* - or *her* - is used

The prepositional adverb is not used in such contexts (see also **7.2.4**):

Wir fanden eine Hütte und gingen **hinein**	*We found a hut and went into it*
Sie kam an einen langen Gang und eilte **hindurch**	*She came to a long passage and hurried through it*

3.5.2 Further notes on the prepositional adverb

(a) The second syllable of the prepositional adverb is usually stressed

da ´ **durch** da ´ **mit** da ´ **von** da ´ **ran** da ´ **rüber**

In spoken German the first syllable may be reduced, e.g. *dran*, *drauf*, *drin*, *drunter*, and these forms are sometimes used in writing.

However, if the prepositional adverb replaces a preposition plus a demonstrative (i.e. = 'with **that**', 'in **that**', etc., see **5.1.1i**), then the **first** syllable is stressed, e.g. ´ ***da*** *durch*, ´ ***da*** *mit*, ´ ***da*** *ran*.

´ **Da** mit war alles unter Dach und Fach	*With that everything was sorted*

(b) Four common prepositions do not form a prepositional adverb

i.e. ***außer***, ***gegenüber***, ***ohne***, ***seit***. These are used with pronouns referring to people *or* things:

Außer ihm ist keiner gekommen	*Nobody came apart from him*
Vor uns ist das Rathaus, und **ihm gegenüber** liegt der Dom	In front of us is the town hall and opposite it is the cathedral
Ohne es wäre unser Erfolg nicht möglich gewesen	*Without it our success wouldn't have been possible*

When referring to things, the pronoun is usually omitted after *gegenüber* and *ohne*, e.g. *(ihm)* **gegenüber** liegt der Dom; **ohne** *(es) wäre es nicht möglich gewesen*. ***außer*** and ***seit*** are never used with a pronoun to refer to things, and the adverbs *außerdem* 'besides (that)' and *seither* 'since (then)' are used instead.

No prepositional adverbs are formed from the prepositions which govern the genitive. For the use of pronouns with them, see **3.1.2**.

(c) In colloquial speech the prepositional adverb is often split

Da weiß ich nichts **von**	**Da** kann ich nichts **mit** anfangen

This usage is mainly North German, but it has recently become more widespread. If the preposition begins with a vowel, the reduced form of the prepositional adverb is used as the second part rather than the preposition, e.g.:

Da habe ich nicht **dran** gedacht

(d) The prepositional adverb can anticipate a following dependent clause

Ich verlasse mich **darauf**, dass sie rechtzeitig kommt

Details about this construction are given in sections **6.4.1c**, **16.5.14** and **17.2.3b**.

3.6 The pronoun *es*

The pronoun *es* has a range of uses beyond simply referring back to a neuter noun. In many constructions it functions as a grammatical particle, and this section explains all these.

Note that ***es* can never be stressed**. If emphasis is needed *es* is replaced by the demonstrative *das* (see **5.1.1h**):

Sind **das** Ihre Handschuhe?	**Das** bist du.	Ich mache **das** schon.

3.6.1 *es* can refer to elements other than neuter nouns

es can refer

(a) to a whole phrase, sentence or situation

Willst du die Brötchen holen? Angela macht **es** schon	*Will you get the rolls? Angela is already doing it*
Ich weiß, dass sie gestorben ist, aber Uwe weiß **es** noch nicht	*I know that she is dead, but Uwe doesn' t know (it) yet*

(b) to the predicate complement of *sein* or *werden*

to refer back to a noun or adjective after one of these verbs in the preceding clause. Inserting *es* is obligatory in contexts like this, whereas in English either no equivalent or a different construction is required:

Er soll zuverlässig sein, und ich bin sicher, dass er **es** ist	*He is said to be reliable and I am sure he is*
Ist Jürgen ein guter Schwimmer? Ja, er ist **es**	Is Jürgen a good swimmer? Yes, he is (one)
Sein Vater ist Arzt, und er wird **es** auch	*His father is a doctor and he's going to be one, too*

3.6.2 Special uses of *es*

(a) *es* is used as the impersonal subject of the verb in many constructions

(i) *es* is used as the subject of all kinds of impersonal verbs or verbs used in impersonal constructions:

es regnet	**es** klingelt	**es** fehlt mir an Geld	**es** bedarf noch einiger Mühe

More details on the use of *es* as an impersonal subject are given in **16.2.4**.

(ii) *es* can be used as an indefinite subject, to give the idea of a vague, impersonal agent:

Erst wurde **es** dunkel, dann gewitterte **es**	*First it got dark, then there was thunder and lightning*
Ihn trieb **es** in die schottischen Hochlande (*Zeit*)	*He felt a desire to go to the Highlands of Scotland*

(iii) *es* is used in impersonal reflexive constructions, which often have the force of a passive, see **13.4.3b**:

Es schreibt **sich** so leicht mit diesem Filzstift	*It's so easy to write with this felt-tip pen*
Abends lernt **es sich** am besten	*It is best to study in the evenings*

(iv) *es* is used in impersonal passive constructions and in passive constructions with intransitive verbs (see **13.1.3a** and **13.1.4**):

Es wurde in dieser Zeit viel gearbeitet	*A lot of work was done at this time*
Es wurde im Nebenzimmer geredet	*There was talking in the next room*
Es kann ihm doch nicht geholfen werden	*He can't be helped, though*

In these constructions *es* is always omitted if it is not in first position in a main clause, e.g. *In dieser Zeit wurde viel gearbeitet. Wir wissen doch, dass in dieser Zeit viel gearbeitet wurde*

(b) *es* can be used as an indeterminate subject with *sein* and *werden*

(i) This corresponds to the English use of *it*:

Es ist der Briefträger, ein Polizist	*It's the postman, a policeman*
Es wurde spät	*It got late*
Es ist Mittag	*It's midday*
Es ist Sonntag heute	*It's Sunday today*

es can be omitted with a time phrase if it is not in initial position, e.g. *Jetzt ist (es) Mittag. Er weiß, dass (es) heute Sonntag ist.*

(ii) *es* can be used with a plural verb and then corresponds to English 'they', see **10.1.4b**:

Es sind Ausländer	*They're foreigners*
Sind **es** Ihre Handschuhe?	*Are they your gloves?*
Was sind **es** ?	*What are they?*

(iii) In this function, *es* can refer back to a masculine, feminine or

plural noun, as an alternative to the expected masculine, feminine or plural pronoun:

Seine Mutter lebt noch. **Es/Sie** ist eine alte Frau	*His mother is still alive. She's an old woman*
Siehst du die Kinder dort? **Es/ Sie** sind meine	*Can you see the children there? They're mine*

(c) *es* with *sein* and a personal pronoun

i.e. corresponding to English 'It's me', 'It's them', etc.

(i) The German construction is different to the English one, in that the person involved is the subject of *sein*, and *es* follows as the predicate:

Du bist **es**. Ich bin **es**	*It's you. It's me*
Seid ihr **es** gewesen?	*Was it you?*
Sie werden **es** wohl sein	*It will probably be them*

(ii) So-called CLEFT SENTENCE constructions with relative clauses are based on this construction in German. These correspond to English constructions like 'It was you who rang the bell':

Er war **es**, der es mir sagte	*It was him who told me*
Du warst **es** also, der geklingelt hat	*So it was you who rang the bell*

Other cleft sentence constructions, especially those corresponding to the English type 'It was this morning that I saw her', are used much less often in German than in English (see **19.2.3a**).

(d) *es* can be used as a 'dummy subject'

i.e. it is placed in initial position, before the verb, so that the 'real' subject can come later in the sentence. This construction is particularly

frequent if the 'real' subject is a noun phrase with an indefinite article or an indefinite quantifier. It gives more emphasis to the 'real' subject, see **19.2.2d**.

(i) With *sein*, this *es* corresponds to 'there' in 'there is/are':

Es ist ein Brief für Sie da	*There's a letter for you*
Es waren viele Wolken am Himmel	*There were a lot of clouds in the sky*

This *es* is omitted if it is not in first position in a main clause, e.g. *Viele Wolken waren am Himmel. Ich weiß, dass ein Brief für mich da ist.* In such contexts it is not necessary, since the 'real' subject is in its expected place.

For the use of *es ist/sind* and *es gibt* for English 'there is/are', see **16.2.5**.

(ii) In German, unlike English, *es* can be used in this construction with **any** verb. The verb then agrees with the 'real' subject, not with the *es*:

Es saß eine alte Frau am Fenster	*There was an old woman sitting at the window*
Es hatte sich auch ihr Verhältnis zu den Nachbarn verändert	*Their relationship to their neighbours had changed, too*
Es liegen zwei Briefe für Sie auf dem Schreibtisch	*There are two letters for you lying on the desk*

This construction is particularly frequent with verbs of happening:

Es ist gestern ein schwerer Unfall **passiert**	*A serious accident happened yesterday*

In spoken German *da* is often used rather than *es* in these contexts, e.g. ***Da** hat eine alte Frau am Fenster gesessen.*

(e) The 'anticipatory' *es* pointing forward to a subject

clause

es can be used to anticipate a following subordinate or infinitive clause which is the subject of the verb, e.g.:

Es freut mich, **dass** du dein Examen bestanden hast	*I am pleased that you passed your examination*
Es fällt mir ein, **dass** ich ihn schon gesehen haben muss	It occurs to me that I must already have seen him
Es war mir nicht möglich, früher **zu** kommen	It wasn't possible for me to come earlier
Es liegt mir fern, Schwierigkeiten **zu** machen	*The last thing I want is to make difficulties*

If the clause precedes the verb there is no need for the *es*, e.g. *Dass du dein Examen bestanden hast, freut mich.*

This 'anticipatory' *es* is sometimes omitted if it is not in first position in a main clause:

Dann fiel (**es**) auf, **dass** er kein weißes Hemd trug	*Then it was noticed that he wasn't wearing a white shirt*
Ihm steht (**es**) nicht zu, ein Urteil **zu** fällen	*It's not up to him to pass judgement*

There is considerable variation in whether *es* is retained or omitted in these contexts. The following general tendencies reflect current usage:

(i) The omission of *es* is especially frequent (but not obligatory) with the following verbs:

auffallen	sich ergeben aus	gelten	vorschweben
aufgehen	sich erweisen	sich herausstellen	sich zeigen
dazukommen	feststehen	hervorgehen	
einfallen	folgen aus	hinzukommen	

(ii) With many verbs, especially those expressing feelings and emotions, *es* can be omitted before a following *dass* -clause if the

main clause begins with a pronoun:

Ihn interessiert (es) nur, dass ihr Vater viel Geld hat	*The only thing that interests him is that her father's got a lot of money*
Damit hängt (es) natürlich zusammen, dass er im Gefängnis sitzt	*Of course, that's connected with the fact that he's in prison*

(iii) *es* can be omitted with the verb *sein* if the main clause begins with the noun or adjective which is the predicate complement of *sein*:

Wichtig ist (es), dass er es weiß	*It's important for him to know it*
Wichtig ist (es), diesen Satz richtig zu verstehen	*It is important to understand this sentence correctly*
Ein Glück ist (es), dass du kommst	*It's fortunate you're coming*

With *klar*, *leicht*, *möglic h*, *schwer* and *wichtig*, *es* can be omitted in these constructions if the main clause begins with a pronoun:

Ihm war (es) völlig klar, dass er jetzt springen musste	*It was quite clear to him that he had to jump now*

(iv) *es* is never omitted before *wenn* -clauses: *Mir ist **es** recht, wenn sie jetzt kommt.*

(f) The 'anticipatory' *es* pointing forward to an object clause

es is often used to anticipate a following infinitive or *dass* -clause which is the object of the verb:

Ich konnte **es** kaum ertragen, ihn so leiden zu sehen	*I could hardly bear to see him suffer like that*
Ich habe **es** erlebt, dass Anne die beste Arbeit geschrieben hat	*I have known Anne to write the best piece of work*

(i) The use of this 'anticipatory' *es* is variable, and there are no hard and fast rules as to when it is used and when not.

However, it is especially frequent with the following verbs, so that the advice to the foreign learner is to always use it with them:

ablehnen	erleben	leiden	verantworten
angewöhnen	ermöglichen	leisten	verdienen
aufgeben	ertragen	leugnen	vergessen
aushalten	fertig bringen	lieben	vermeiden
bedauern	genießen	merken	versäumen
begrüßen	gönnen	mögen	vertragen
bemerken	halten für	schaffen	verzeihen
bereuen	hassen	schätzen	wagen
betrachten als	hindern	übel nehmen	zulassen
dulden	hinnehmen	überlassen	
erfahren	lassen	unterlassen	

The phrases *nicht erwarten können* and *nicht wahrhaben wollen* are also normally used with an anticipatory *es*, as is *finden* followed by an adjective, e.g. *Ich finde* ***es*** *schön, dass du da bist.*

(ii) Verbs of saying, thinking and knowing, e.g. *ahnen*, *denken*, *erzähle n*, *fühle n*, *glauben*, *höre n*, *sagen*, *wissen* are also often used with an anticipatory *es* in conjunction with certain adverbs and particles, in particular *bereits*, *deutlich*, *doch*, *genug*, *ja*, *oft* and *schon*, or when there is an appeal to the listener's prior knowledge, e.g.:

Ich habe (es) ihm deutlich gesagt, dass er schreiben muss	*I told him clearly enough that he's got to write*
Ich ahnte (es) schon, dass sie schwanger ist	*I already suspected she was pregnant*
Ich weiß (es) ja selber, dass die Ampel rot war	*I know myself that the lights were red*

(g) *es* corresponds to English ‘so’ as the object of a few verbs

In particular *sagen* ‘say’ and *tun* ‘do’:

Er hat **es** gesagt	*He said so*
Warum hast du **es** getan?	*Why did you do so?*

es can also be used with *glauben* and *hoffen*, but it is not obligatory:

Kommt sie? – Ich glaube/hoffe (es)	*Is she coming? – I think/hope so*

(h) *es* is used as an object in a number of idiomatic verbal phrases

In these cases *es* is an essential part of the idiom. The following are the most frequent:

es auf etwas absehen	*to be after sth.*
es auf etwas ankommen lassen	to take a chance on sth.
es jdm. antun	to appeal to sb.
sie hat es ihm angetan	he fancies her
es mit jdm./etwas aufnehmen können	to be a match for sb./sth.
es bei etwas belassen	to leave it at sth.
es weit bringen	to go far
es zu etwas bringen	to attain sth. (esp. a position)
er hat es zum Professor gebracht	he got to be a professor
es an etwas fehlen lassen	to be lacking in sth.
es eilig haben	to be in a hurry
es gut/schlecht haben	to be (un)fortunate
es in sich haben	to be a tough nut to crack
es sich leicht/schwer machen	to make it easy/difficult for oneself
es gut mit jdm. meinen	to mean well with sb.
es mit etwas genau nehmen	to be punctilious with sth.
es mit jdm. zu tun haben	to have to deal with sb.
	to have fallen out with sb.

es sich mit jdm. verdorben haben es mit etwas versuchen	*to try (one's hand at) sth.*

(i) *es* used with adjectives in conjunction with *sein* or *werden*

When some adjectives are used as the predicate complement of *sein* or *werden*, they are preceded by *es*, e.g. *Ich bin* **es** *satt* 'I am sick of it'. This *es* is used especially with those adjectives which govern the genitive of nouns (see **6.3.3**), e.g. *Ich bin* ***es*** *nun überdrüssig.*

The following adjectives occur in this construction:

los müde satt teilhaftig überdrüssig wert würdig zufrieden

Also:

Ich bin **es** gewohnt	*I am used to it*
Ich wurde **es** gewahr (*lit.*)	*I became aware of it*

When *gewohnt sein* and *wert sein* are used with a following *dass* - clause, the *es* can be used to anticipate the subordinate clause, e.g. *Ich bin* **(es)** *nicht mehr gewohnt, am frühen Morgen aufzustehen.* This usage is common, but not obligatory.

The articles

German, like English, has a DEFINITE and an INDEFINITE ARTICLE.

The **ARTICLES** belong to a closed set of small words known as **DETERMINERS**. They are used with **NOUNS** to link them to a particular context or situation. Besides the articles, the determiners include all those words, like the **DEMONSTRATIVES** (*dieser*, *jener*, etc.), the **POSSESSIVE S** (*mein*, *sein*, etc.) and **INDEFINITES** (*einige*, *etliche*, etc.), which are used to specify nouns. They typically have **first position** in a **NOUN PHRASE**, before any adjectives, as shown in **Table 4.1**.

Table 4.1 The noun phrase: determiners (articles)

Determiner	Adjective	Noun
der	runde	Tisch
ein	schnelles	Auto
eine	außerordentlich	Zeitung
das	langweilige	Bier
	in der bayrischen	
	Hauptstadt gebraute	

The form and use of the articles are explained in this chapter; the other determiners are dealt with in **Chapter 5**.

The definite and indefinite articles **DECLINE**, i.e. they have endings which indicate the grammatical categories of the nouns they are used with: **CASE**, **NUMBER** and **GENDER**. In practice **the forms of the article are the main way these categories of the noun are shown** in German, and mastering them is essential to be able to use and understand German. **Tables 4.2** and **4.3** show the declension of the

definite article ***der*** – ***die*** – ***das*** and the indefinite article ***ein*** – ***eine***.

Table 4.2 Declension of the definite article

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	der	die	das	die
Accusative	den	die	das	die
Genitive	des	der	des	der
Dative	dem	der	dem	den

Table 4.3 Declension of the indefinite article

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Nominative	ein	eine	ein
Accusative	einen	eine	ein
Genitive	eines	einer	eines
Dative	einem	einer	einem

In most instances (85%) German and English agree on whether the definite, indefinite or no ('zero') article is used with a noun in a particular context. However, as the articles are very frequent, the contexts where the two languages do not correspond are significant, in particular where German uses a definite article when English has none. This chapter deals with the **forms** and **uses** of the **articles** as follows:

- The **declension** of the definite and indefinite articles (section **4.1**)
- The use of the articles with **abstract** and other similar **nouns** (section **4.2**)
- The use of the articles in **generalizations** (section **4.3**)
- The use of the articles with **names** (section **4.4**)
- The use of the articles in **time expressions** (section **4.5**)
- The use of the definite article to indicate **possession** (section **4.6**)
- Other contexts where **German and English differ** in the use of the articles (section **4.7**)
- The '**zero article**' – the noun used **with no article** (section **4.8**)

- The use of the articles with **phrasal verbs** (section **4.9**)
- The use of the articles with **prepositions** (section **4.10**)

4.1 The declension of the articles

4.1.1 The definite article

The declension of the definite article ***der/die/das*** is given in **Table 4.2**, and this section provides further information on these forms.

(a) In spoken German the definite article is lightly stressed

This means that reduced forms are the norm, e.g.:

der [dɐ]	*die* [dɪ]	*das* [d(ə)s] or [s]
den [d(ə)n] or [n]	*dem* [d(ə)m] or [m]	*des* [d(ə)s]

These reductions rarely occur in writing, except to reflect speech in written dialogue, but they are the norm in unaffected speech, since the full forms, e.g. [de: m], have the force of a demonstrative, i.e. 'this' or 'that', see **5.1.1**. Compare:

Ich habe' **n** Tisch gekauft	*I bought* **the** *table*
Ich habe **den** [de:n] Tisch gekauft	*I bought* **that** *table*

(b) The definite article cannot be omitted in pairs of words if a different gender or number is involved

In English we can say 'the house and garden(s)' or 'the son and daughter(s)', with the definite article being understood to refer to the second noun as well. This is only possible in German if the two nouns

have the same gender or number. In other contexts the second article with its different form **must** be included:

das Haus und **der** Garten/ **die** Gärten	**der** Sohn und **die** Tochter/ **die** Töchter

On the other hand, ***die*** *Söhne und Töchter* is correct, since both nouns are plural and would have the same article. However, the article can only be omitted if the nouns are linked in some way. We can only say *der Bürgermeister und Vorsitzende des Vereins*, for example, if both nouns refer to the same person. If two different people are being referred to, the article is repeated: *der Bürgermeister und der Vorsitzende des Vereins*. This is the same in English, since we would also have to say *The mayor and the chairman of the club* if they are not the same person.

This rule applies to all the other determiners, and to adjectives used with nouns, e.g. ***sein*** *Sohn und* ***seine*** *Töchter* but ***seine*** *Söhne und Töchter*; ***guter*** *Wein und* ***gutes*** *Bier* but ***alte*** *Männer und Frauen*, see **6.1.3f**.

(c) Contracted forms of the definite article are used with some prepositions

We can distinguish:

(i) Contractions which are usual in both speech and writing:

ans = an + das	**am** = an + dem	**beim** = bei + dem	**ins** = in + das
im = in + dem	**vom** = von + dem	**zum** = zu + dem	**zur** = zu + der

In these cases the uncontracted forms are only used if the article is relatively stressed. This often depends on style and sentence rhythm, although many Germans consider the uncontracted forms to be 'better style' in formal writing. Uncontracted forms

are also particularly frequent to refer back to something recently mentioned in order to make it clear that it is the one meant. Note the difference between:

Er ging **zu der** Hütte (the one we were just talking about)

Er ging **zur** Hütte (the one we all know about)

Where the force of ***der*** is demonstrative (= 'that', see **5.1.1**), only the uncontracted form is possible:

Einer der Affen war besonders lebhaft. Klaus wollte unbedingt eine Aufnahme von **dem** Affen machen	*One of the monkeys was particularly active. Klaus really wanted to take a picture of that monkey*

Similarly, where the noun is particularized, e.g. by a following relative clause, the uncontracted form is usual:

an dem Nachmittag, an dem sie anrief	*on the afternoon when she called*
Er geht **zu der** Schule, wo sein Vater früher war	*He goes to the school where his father used to be*

On the other hand, only the contracted forms are used in set phrases and expressions, e.g.:

am Dienstag	**am** 10. Mai	**am** einfachsten
im Frühling	**im** Freien	**im** Gang
zum Frühstück	**zur** Zeit	**im** Vertrauen
Ich nahm ihn **beim** Wort	Sie war **beim** Kochen	

Compare:

Am Dienstag kam er spät zur Arbeit	*On Tuesday he came to work late*
An dem Dienstag kam er spät zur Arbeit	*That Tuesday he came to work late*

(ii) Contractions which are common in speech and sometimes used in writing. These are:

aufs = auf + das **durchs** = durch + das **fürs** = für + das
übers = über + das **ums** = um + das **unters** = unter + das

These are usually written as two words, although there are some set phrases where the contracted forms are always used, e.g.:

aufs Land fahren **übers** Herz bringen
fürs Leben gern **ums** Leben kommen

(iii) Contractions which are frequent in spoken German, but only very occasionally used in writing, usually in set phrases or in imitation of casual speech. These are:

außerm	hinterm	hintern	hinters	überm
übern	unterm	untern	vorm	vors

(iv) Other contractions are regular in everyday colloquial speech but not normally used in writing, e.g.:

an'n bei'n durch'n in'n mit'm nach'm seit'm

4.1.2 The forms of the indefinite article

The declension of the indefinite article ***ein*** is given in **Table 4.3**, and this section provides further information on these forms.

(a) The indefinite article has no plural

Indefinite plural nouns are used without an article, as in English:

Hier gibt es gute Weine *There are good wines here*

(b) In spoken German the definite article is lightly

stressed

This means that reduced forms are the norm, e.g.:

ein [n]	*eine* [nə]	*einen* [nən]
einem [nəm]	*einer* [nɐ]	*eines* [nəs]

These reductions are rare in writing except in imitation of casual dialogue, but they are the norm in unaffected speech, where the full forms, e.g. [aɪn], [aɪn ə n], etc., would be interpreted as the numeral *ein* 'one'. Compare:

Ich habe **'n** Buch gekauft	*I bought* **a** *book*
Ich habe **ein** [aɪn] Buch gekauft	*I bought* **one** *book*

(c) The indefinite article *ein* has a negative form *kein*

It is used typically where a corresponding positive sentence would have an indefinite article or no article, and it is thus most often the equivalent of English *not … a*, *not … any* or *no*. Further details on its use are given in **5.5.16**:

Es war ein angenehmer Anblick	Es war **kein** angenehmer Anblick
Kennst du einen Arzt?	Kennst du **keinen** Arzt?
Hier gibt es gute Weine	Hier gibt es **keine** guten Weine
Ich habe Geld	Ich habe **kein** Geld

Unlike *ein*, *kein* has a plural form, and its full declension is given in **Table 4.4**.

Table 4.4 Declension of the negative indefinite article *kein*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	kein	keine	kein	keine
Accusative	keinen	keine	kein	keine
Genitive	keines	keiner	keines	keiner
Dative	keinem	keiner	keinem	keinen

4.2 The definite article with abstract and similar nouns

This section deals with abstract nouns and other similar groups of nouns which are characteristically used with a definite article in German, but no article in English.

4.2.1 Abstract nouns

(a) German typically uses a definite article with abstract nouns

This is particularly the case where the reference is to a specific and definite whole, known and familiar to the speaker and listener. An article is normally lacking in contexts like this in English.

Er fürchtet **das Alter**	*He is afraid of old age*
Er liebte **die Demokratie**	He loved democracy
Wir hängen von **der Industrie** ab	We depend on industry
Die Zeit vergeht	Time passes
Das Volk lebt **im Elend** (*Spiegel*)	The people are living in misery
Die Menschheit braucht nichts nötiger als **den Frieden**	*Humanity needs nothing more urgently than peace*

(b) In some contexts no article is used with abstract nouns

In contrast to the more typical cases exemplified in **(a)** above, there are some contexts where German has no article with abstract nouns, in particular where the idea is not referred to as a whole, but in a vaguely general, indefinite and partial sense, which comes as a new idea in the context. It is typical of these contexts that *some* or *any* can often be inserted in the corresponding English sentence without changing its

essential meaning:

Zu dieser Aufgabe gehört **Mut**	*This task demands (some) courage*
Seine Parteifreunde witterten **Verrat**	His party colleagues suspected (some) treachery
Unentschlossenheit wäre jetzt verhängnisvoll	(Any) indecision now would be disastrous
Bewegung ist gesund	*(Any) exercise is healthy*

Compare the following sentences:

Unter seinen Anhängern entstand **Misstrauen**	*(Some) distrust arose among his followers*
Das Misstrauen wächst unter seinen Anhängern	*Distrust is growing among his followers*

In the first sentence 'distrust' is a new concept of a rather vague, general and indefinite kind. In the second it is a specific and familiar notion. In practice, however, the distinction is sometimes quite slight, and there are contexts where either the definite article or no article is possible, e.g.:

Sie kämpfen für **(die)** Gerechtigkeit	*They are fighting for justice*

In practice such a partial or indefinite sense is often present when an abstract noun, particularly one denoting a human quality or emotion, is used with an adjective. In such contexts no article is used in German:

Ich verachte **kleinliche Eifersucht**	*I despise (any) petty jealousy*
Im Heer wuchs **neuer Mut**	In the army new courage was growing
Er neigt zu **unnötiger Verschwendung**	*He tends to unnecessary extravagance*

Abstract nouns in general statements can be used with the definite article or with no article, e.g.:

(Der) Frieden ist das höchste Gut der Menschen	*Peace is man's greatest good*

(c) No article is used with abstract nouns in proverbs, sayings and set phrases

There is often no article with abstract nouns in these, e.g.:

Alter schützt vor **Torheit** nicht	*There's no fool like an old fool*
Not kennt kein Gebot	Necessity knows no law
Stolz ist keine Tugend	*Pride is not a virtue*

(d) No article is used with abstract nouns in a few other contexts

- in pairs of words and enumerations, see **4.8.1**.
- in some constructions with the verbs *sein* and *werden*, see **4.8.2**.
- with some phrasal verbs, see **4.9**.

4.2.2 Other nouns typically used with a definite article

The use of the article with a few other groups of nouns is similar to that with abstract nouns, and differs from English.

(a) Names of substances

These have a definite article if they are understood as general concepts, but no article if they are used in an indefinite or partial sense:

Die Butter kostete 3 Euro das Pfund	*Butter cost 3 euros a pound*
Faraday hat **die Elektrizität** erforscht	Faraday investigated electricity
Die Bauern bauen hier **Roggen** an	The farmers grow rye here
Wir importieren **Kaffee** aus Afrika	*We import coffee from Africa*

In generalizations, either the definite article or no article can be used:

(Das) Eisen ist ein Metall	*Iron is a metal*
(Die) Elektrizität ist eine wichtige Energiequelle	*Electricity is an important source of energy*

The definite article occurs in some set phrases, e.g. *beim Bier sitzen; Das steht nur auf dem Papier.*

(b) Names of meals

The definite article is used with meals if they are referred to as known quantities, but the article is optional if the reference is indefinite or partial:

Das Mittagessen wird um 13 Uhr eingenommen	*Lunch is taken at 1 p.m.*
Wir sollen uns vor **dem Frühstück** treffen	We are to meet before breakfast
Ich habe **(das) Mittagessen** bestellt	I have ordered lunch
Wann bekommen wir **(das) Frühstück** ?	*When are we getting breakfast?*

(c) Names of sicknesses and diseases

These have a definite article when they are referred to in general as known quantities, but there is no article when they are referred to in an indefinite or partial sense, or as a new idea in the context, particularly after *haben*:

Er ist an **der Schwindsucht** gestorben	*He died of consumption*
Sie ist an **den Masern** erkrankt	She fell ill with measles
Die Grippe hat Tausende weggerafft	Influenza carried off thousands
Ich habe **Kopfschmerzen**,	*I've got a headache, jaundice*

Gelbsucht

Singular names of specific illnesses are used with the indefinite article to refer to a bout of that disease. This is in particular the case when the noun is modified by an adjective:

Er ist an **einer Lungenentzündung** gestorben	*He died of (a bout of) pneumonia*
Er hat **einen Schnupfen**, **eine Erkältung**	*He's got a cold*

(d) Names of languages

These nouns from adjectives have two forms, see also **6.2.4d**:

(i) an inflected one, always used with the definite article, which refers to the language in a general sense:

Das Spanische ist **dem Portugiesischen** sehr nahe verwandt	*Spanish is very closely related to Portuguese*
eine Übersetzung aus **dem Russischen ins Deutsche**	*a translation from Russian into German*

(ii) an uninflected form, which refers to the language in a specific context. With this, article use is the same as in English:

das **Deutsch** der Auswanderer	*the German of the emigrants*
Luthers **Deutsch**	Luther's German
Sie kann, versteht, lernt **Deutsch**	She knows, understands, is learning German
Sie kann **kein Deutsch**	She doesn't know any German
eine Zusammenfassung **in Deutsch**	*a summary in German*

(iii) The distinction in usage between these two forms is not always clear-cut, particularly with compound forms or when the

noun is qualified by an adjective. In the nominative the uninflected forms tend to be preferred, e.g. *das Schweizerdeutsch*, *das österreichische Deutsch*, as also in the dative with an adjective, e.g. *im heutigen Deutsch*, and in this case the definite article is also present. But with compounds with no adjective after *im* there is a clear preference for using the inflected form, e.g. *im Hochdeutschen.*

(e) Names of historical periods, literary and philosophical movements, religions

The definite article is normally used with these:

der deutsche Expressionismus	*German Expressionism*
Diese Auffassung ist charakteristisch für **den Islam**	This view is characteristic of Islam
Marx begreift **den Feudalismus** als notwendige Stufe der historischen Entwicklung (*Knaur*)	*Marx considers feudalism to be a necessary stage in the process of history*

(f) Names of the arts and sciences

The definite article is normally used with these:

Ich erwarte von **der Literatur** mehr Anregung als **vom Leben** (*Grass*)	*I expect more stimulus from literature than from life*
Darüber schweigt **die Geschichte**	History is silent about that
ein Lehrbuch **der Astronomie**	a textbook of astronomy
Sie liebt **die Musik**	*She loves music*

No article is used to refer to school or university subjects, e.g. *Sie hat eine Zwei in **Geschichte** aber eine Vier in **Mathe**. Else studiert **Astronomie** in Göttingen.*

(g) Names of institutions, company titles and buildings

The definite article is normally always used with these:

Sie geht in **die Schule**	*She goes to school*
Er wurde **ins Parlament** gewählt	He was elected to parliament
Die Bundesrepublik gehört **der NATO** an	The Federal Republic belongs to NATO
Er arbeitet bei **der BASF**	He works for BASF
im Kölner **Dom**, **das** Ulmer **Rathaus**	*in Cologne cathedral, Ulm town hall*

No article is used with names of buildings with a proper name in apposition, e.g. *Schloss Sanssouci, Burg Gibichstein, Kloster Beuron.*

(h) Infinitives used as nouns

The definite article is used with these when they are used in a general sense:

Er hat **das Schwimmen** verlernt	*He has forgotten how to swim*
Das Kaffeetrinken kam im 17. Jahrhundert nach Europa	*Coffee-drinking came to Europe in the 17th century*

4.3 The use of articles in generalizations

Generalizations about people and things can be expressed in different ways. Compare the following possibilities in German and English:

	The fir is a conifer
	[no direct English equivalent]
(a) Die Tanne ist ein Nadelbaum	*A fir is a conifer*
(b) Die Tannen sind Nadelbäume	*Firs are conifers*
(c) Eine Tanne ist ein Nadelbaum	

(d) Tannen sind Nadelbäume

German tends to use constructions like (a) above, especially in writing, whereas English has a clear preference for sentences like (d). The following example illustrates a characteristic equivalence:

Das Auto ist der Fluch der modernen Stadt (*Zeit*)	*Cars are the curse of modern cities*

Construction (b), with a definite article and a plural noun, is quite common in German, but it is only used in English with a limited number of nouns (especially nouns of nationality). Compare:

Die Beschwerden vermehren sich	*Complaints are increasing*
Die Steuern waren drückend (*Brecht*)	Taxes were oppressive
Die Italiener lieben die Musik	*The Italians love music*

English 'man' in the sense 'human being' is not normally used with an article, while *der Mensch*, with a definite article, is regular in German in general statements of type (a) above, e.g.:

Der Mensch ist ein seltsames Geschöpf	*Man is a strange animal*

4.4 Articles with geographical and other proper names

4.4.1 Geographical and astronomical names

(a) Masculine names of countries

(See **1.1.6h**). With these, the definite article is usual, but optional:

(der) Libanon **(der)** Iran **in/im** Sudan

With masculine names of regions or provinces the use of the definite article is the norm, e.g. *der Balkan, der Bosporus*.

(b) Feminine and plural names of countries and regions

These are **always** used with a definite article:

die Schweiz	**die** Türkei	**die** Ukraine
die Lausitz	**die** Normandie	**die** Steiermark
die USA	**die** Niederlande	

(c) Neuter names of countries and cities

No article is used with most of these:

Deutschland Norwegen Spanien Leipzig London Ulm

However, some neuter names of regions and provinces are normally used with the article:

das Elsass	**das** Engadin	**das** Wallis *Valais*
das Rheinland	**das** Ries	
	das Vogtland (and all others in *-land*)	

Historical German regions are sometimes referred to with an adjectival noun, e.g. *Jetzt kommen wir* **ins Bayrische**; *Das Dorf liegt* **im Thüringischen**. The definite article is always used with these.

The definite article is optional with *Tirol*: ***in/im** Tirol*.

(d) Other geographical and astronomical names always have a definite article

This is so even where English has no article:

der Mont Blanc	**der** Genfer See	**der** Bodensee *Lake Constance*
der Mars	**die** Venus	**der** Jupiter

(e) The definite article is commonly used to refer to street names

Ich wohne in **der** Goethestraße

Wir treffen uns auf **dem** Schlossplatz

Der Alexanderweg ist die zweite Querstraße **zur** Humboldtstraße

However, no article is used in addresses: *Frau Gerlinde Haarmann, Weserstraße 247, 34125 Kassel.*

4.4.2 Use of the article with personal names

In standard German there is usually no article with personal names. However, there are some exceptions to this rule:

(a) In colloquial speech a definite article is frequent with names

Ich sehe **die** Monika	Gestern war ich bei **der** Frau Schmidt

This usage is characteristic of South German speech, where the use of the article is universal, but it has spread into North Germany in recent years.

(b) The article is always used with names placed outside

the sentence

in so-called 'dislocation' to the right or left:

> **Den** Robert Bauer, den kann sie einfach nicht riechen.
>
> Hat er irgendwas gewusst davon, **der** Peter?
>
> Ich habe sie seit langem nicht mehr gesehen, **die** Angelika

(c) To clarify case or gender

(see also **4.7a**):

> der Vortrag **des** Klaus Müller Das hat Klaus **dem** Wolfgang Pedersen gesagt
>
> Ich habe eben mit **der** Rupp (i.e. **Frau** Rupp, *not* **Herr** Rupp) gesprochen

(d) To individualize the person concerned more strongly

> **Der** Lehmann hat einen ausgezeichneten Vortrag gehalten
>
> die Briefe Leopold Mozarts an **das** Nannerl (*Hildesheimer*)

(e) to refer to characters in plays

> Er hat in der vorigen Saison **den** Hamlet gespielt

4.4.3 Geographical and proper names qualified by an adjective

A definite article is always used when names have an adjective with them.

das heutige Deutschland	**das** viktorianische England	**das** zerstörte Dresden
das kalte Moskau	**der** junge Heinrich	**der** alte Doktor Schulze

This applies also to saints' names: ***der*** *heilige Franziskus* 'Saint Francis'.

4.5 The use of articles in time expressions

(a) The names of months and seasons are used with a definite article

Der April war verregnet Wir fahren **im August** nach Italien

Der Frühling war dieses Jahr spät **Im Winter** friert der Bach zu

The names of the months have no article after prepositions other than *an*, *bis zu* and *in* (see below), or after *Anfang*, *Mitte*, *Ende*:

Es war kalt für April Der Fahrplan gilt von Mai bis Oktober

Ende Februar hat es geschneit Er kommt erst Anfang Mai

No article is used with these words after *sein* and *werden*, see **4.8.2c**, e.g. *Es ist, wird Sommer*; or when the name is qualified by *letzten*, *nächsten*, *vorigen*, *vergangenen*, e.g.:

nächsten Oktober letzten Herbst

(b) The major festivals are not used with an article

Weihnachten Silvester Neujahr Pfingsten Ostern

Note though: *der Heilige Abend* 'Christmas Eve', *der Karfreitag* 'Good Friday'

(c) All time nouns are used with the definite article after the prepositions *an*, *bis zu* and *in*

am Mittwoch	**am** 27. Januar	**bis zum** Montag
am Tag *by day*	**in der** Nacht *at night*	**in der** vorigen Woche
in der Gegenwart *at present*	**im** Jahre 1945	

After other prepositions in time expressions there is normally no article. Consult the entries for the individual prepositions in **Chapter 18**.

4.6 Definite article or possessive?

In a number of contexts German uses a definite article rather than a possessive determiner (e.g. *mein*, *sein*, *unser*).

4.6.1 Referring to parts of the body and articles of clothing

(a) German most often uses a definite article with these nouns

This is quite different to English, which always uses a possessive determiner:

Hast du **die** Zähne geputzt?	*Have you cleaned your teeth?*
Sie hat **das** Bein gebrochen	She has broken her leg
Sie strich **den** Rock glatt	She smoothed her skirt
Das Mädchen zog **den** rötlichen Kamm aus **dem** Haar, nahm ihn in **den** Mund und fing an, mit **den** Fingern **die** Frisur zurechtzuzupfen (*Böll*)	*The girl took the reddish comb out of her hair, put it in her mouth and began to put her hair straight with her fingers*

A possessive dative is often used in such constructions, and it is essential when the relevant person is not the subject of the verb, see **2.5.3**, e.g.:

Sie nahm es **(sich)** in den Mund	*She put it in her mouth*
Die Mütze fiel **mir** vom Kopf	My cap fell off my head
Wir zogen **dem Verletzten** die Hose aus	*We took the injured man's trousers off*

(b) A possessive determiner is used rather than the definite article in a few contexts

(i) when the owner has been named in a previous sentence, or when the part of the body or article of clothing is the first element in the sentence:

Ein Fremder erschien. **Seine** Stirn glänzte. **Sein** Anzug war altmodisch	*A stranger appeared. His forehead glistened. His suit was old-fashioned*
Meine Beine sind nicht krumm (*Brecht*)	*My legs aren't crooked*

(ii) when the owner must be specified, but the verb does not permit the use of a possessive dative:

Ich erblickte eine Wespe auf **meinem** Ärmel	*I caught sight of a wasp on my sleeve*
Sie legte **ihre** Hand auf **seine** Hand (*Wendt*)	*She put her hand on his hand*

(iii) to emphasize the owner or avoid ambiguity:

Langsam hob sie **ihre** rechte Hand	*Slowly, she raised her right hand*
Hast du **deine** Zähne geputzt?	Have you cleaned your teeth?
Zieh (dir) lieber **deinen** Mantel an!	Put your coat on (i.e. not mine!)
	I put his trousers on

Ich zog mir **seine** Hose an

4.6.2 Other contexts where a possessive is not used in German

(a) The definite article is sometimes used with some abstract nouns

This is particularly frequent with nouns denoting human attributes and emotions, which are thus seen as 'part' of the person concerned. A possessive dative may occur under the same conditions as with body parts:

Du musst versuchen, **die/deine** Angst zu überwinden	*You must try to overcome your fear*
Ich werde ihm **die Faulheit** austreiben	I shall rid him of his laziness
Der Appetit ist mir vergangen	*I've lost my appetite*

(b) The definite or indefinite article can be used with the adjective *eigen*

The appropriate one of these can be an alternative to a possessive determiner:

Er hat **den/seinen** eigenen Sohn erschlagen	*He killed his own son*
Jetzt haben wir **eine/unsere** eigene Wohnung	*We've got our own flat/a flat of our own now*

Note, as a set phrase with no article: *Das haben wir* **mit eigenen Augen** gesehen.

4.7 Other uses of the definite article

There are a few other contexts where the use of the definite article is unexpected or differs from English.

(a) The definite article is sometimes used to make the case of a noun clear

In the genitive and dative cases in particular a definite article is sometimes used in order primarily to mark the case of a noun.

(i) The definite article used to mark the **genitive** case:

der Geruch **des** Seetangs	*the smell of seaweed*
ein Ausdruck **des** Erstaunens	*an expression of surprise*

In practice no noun (other than a proper name) can be used in the genitive without a determiner or an adjective which shows the case. In this way, the article is essential in the first of the sentences below to show that the noun is in the genitive case. On the other hand, *brauchen* is a transitive verb with a direct object in the accusative case, and no article is needed:

Sie bedarf **der** Ruhe Sie braucht Ruhe	}	*She needs rest*

If ambiguity could arise from the use of a definite article, then a phrase with *von* must be used (see **2.4**). Thus 'the smell of wild boar' has to be given with *der Geruch von Eber* if *der Geruch des Ebers* could be understood in the context to mean 'the smell of **the** wild boar' (i.e. a particular one).

(ii) The definite article used to mark the **dative** case. In these examples the definite article would otherwise not be obligatory (see **4.2.2**), but it is used to resolve an ambiguity or make the function of the particular noun in the sentence clear:

Ich ziehe Kaffee **dem** Tee vor	*I prefer coffee to tea*
Dieses Metall gleicht **dem** Gold	This metal resembles gold
Er hat sich **der** Physik gewidmet	*He devoted himself to physics*

(b) The definite article can be used in a distributive sense

In such contexts English commonly uses the indefinite article or 'per':

Die Butter kostete 3 Euro **das** Pfund	*The butter cost 3 euros a/per pound*
Sie kommt zweimal **die** Woche zu uns (*or* zweimal in der Woche)	She comes to us twice a week
Wir fuhren 80 Kilometer **die** Stunde	*We were doing 80 kilometres per hour*

pro (see **18.1.7d**) and (with measurements) *je*, both without an article, are common alternatives to the definite article in this sense:

Wir zahlten 2 Euro **pro/je** Meter	*We paid 2 euros a/per metre*
Es kostet 20 Euro **pro** Stunde	*It costs 20 euros an hour*

(c) The definite article is always used with *meist*

Er hat **das meiste** Geld	*He has (the) most money*
die meisten Jungen	most of the boys
die meisten meiner Freunde	*most of my friends*

4.8 The 'zero article'

In most contexts English and German agree on whether an article is used or not, but there are some contexts in which no article is used in German where one might be expected or where the usual English equivalent construction has a definite or indefinite article.

4.8.1 Nouns used in pairs or enumerations

These often lack the definite article even if a single noun in the same construction would require an article. Many of these are idiomatic or set phrases:

Form und Inhalt	*form and content*
Tag und Nacht	day and night
mit Müh und Not	with great difficulty
Es geht um Leben und Tod	It's a matter of life and death
in Hülle und Fülle	in plenty
Rhein, Main und Donau sind schiffbare Flüsse	The Rhine, the Main and the Danube are navigable rivers
In Industrie und Handwerk bleiben Tausende von Arbeitsplätzen unbesetzt (*Spiegel*)	*In industry and trade thousands of job vacancies remain unfilled*

4.8.2 No article in the predicate of the verbs *sein, werden, bleiben*

These are COPULAR VERBS (see **16.6**) which have a PREDICATE COMPLEMENT in the nominative case (see **2.1.3**). In some contexts these nouns are used without an article, unlike in English.

(a) With nouns denoting professions, nationality, origins or classes of people in general

Er ist **Arzt**, **Bäcker**, **Installateur**	*He is a doctor, a baker, a plumber*
Ich bin **Deutsche(r)**, **Engländer/-in**, **Schwede/Schwedin**	I am a German, an Englishman/-woman, a Swede
Franz ist **gläubiger Katholik**	Franz is a devout Catholic
Helmut blieb **Junggeselle**	Helmut remained a bachelor
Danach wurde er **Marxist**	*After that he became a Marxist*

But the indefinite article **is** used if the noun refers to a specific

individual, not to a class of person:

Sie ist **eine bekannte Anwältin**	*She is a well-known lawyer*
Er ist **ein richtiger Schauspieler**	*He's a real actor*

The indefinite article is also used in descriptive constructions with professions and positions, e.g.:

Er hatte den Titel **eines Professors**, die Stelle **eines Untersuchungsrichters**	*He had the title of professor, the position of examining magistrate*

(b) With certain nouns, mainly in formal writing

A number of nouns are typically used with no article in formal writing at the beginning of a sentence with *sein* to introduce a general statement. The most frequent of these nouns are *Bedingung*, *Fakt*, *Gegenstand*, *Grundlage*, *Sache*, *Schwerpunkt*, *Tatsache*, *Voraussetzung* and *Ziel*.

Tatsache ist, dass …	*It is a fact that …*
Bedingung dafür ist, dass er den Vertrag unterschreibt	*The condition for this is that he signs the contract*
Auch Anfang Januar brauchen Autofahrer wieder Geduld. **Grund** sind einige Baustellen, Straßensperrungen und Verkehrsänderungen (*MM*)	*At the beginning of January, too, drivers will need to be patient again. This is because of some road works, road closures and diversions*

(c) With the names of the months and the seasons, and abstract nouns used in a general sense

Against the usual rule with these (see **4.2** and **4.5**) they are used with no article after the verb *sein*:

Es war schon **April**	*It was already April*

Jetzt ist **Sommer**	It's summer now
Heute Abend ist **Tanz**	There's a dance on tonight
Das ist **Geschmackssache**	*That is a matter of taste*

4.8.3 'Zero article' for English *some* or *any*

The most frequent equivalent in German for the English indefinite determiners 'some' or 'any' is simply to use the noun without an article:

Ich möchte **Suppe**	*I should like some soup*
Brauchen Sie **Marken** ?	Do you need any stamps?
Ich habe **(rote) Äpfel** gekauft	I bought some (red) apples
wenn du noch **Schwierigkeiten** hast	if you have any more difficulties
Hast du **Geld** bei dir?	*Have you got any money on you?*

For further information on German equivalents for *some* and *any*, see **5.5.9b**.

4.8.4 Other contexts where no article is used

In particular contexts where English typically has a definite or indefinite article:

(a) No article is used in phrases introduced by *als* 'as'

Ich kannte ihn **als Junge**	*I knew him when I was a boy*
Er sprach **als Franzose**	He spoke as a Frenchman
die Bedeutung des Passes **als wichtige(r) Handelstraße**	the significance of the pass as an important trade route
Als überzeugter Demokrat kann ich das nicht gutheißen	As a convinced democrat, I cannot approve of that
Er gilt **als bester Tenor** der Neuzeit	*He is reckoned to be the best tenor*

However, an article can be used with verbs which are usually followed by *als*, e.g. *ansehen*, *betrachten*, *fühlen*, *gelten*: *Er gilt als* **(der)** beste(r) Tenor der Neuzeit.

The article can also be used in the genitive case, e.g. *mit der Verhaftung des Generals als* **(des)** eigentlichen Putschführers.

(b) The article can be omitted in appositional phrases

See **2.6** for information about APPOSITION. The lack of the article is characteristic of formal written registers.

Zunächst kamen wir nach Florenz, **(der) Hauptstadt der Toskana**	*First we arrived in Florence, the capital of Tuscany*
dieses Zürich, **(der) Treffpunkt der Kaufleute** (*Frisch*)	this Zurich, the meeting place of businessmen
Neil Armstrong, **(der) amerikanischer Astronaut**, betrat als erster Mensch den Mond (*Zeit*)	*Neil Armstrong, the American astronaut, was the first man to set foot on the moon*

(c) No article is used in some formulaic expressions referring to people

This usage is typical of formal, especially official registers.

Angeklagter hat gestanden, dass …	*The accused confessed that …*
Unterzeichneter bittet um rasche Entscheidung seiner Angelegenheit	The undersigned requests a speedy decision in the matter concerning him
Verfasser behauptet, das Problem gelöst zu haben	*The author claims to have solved the problem*

(d) Articles are often omitted for stylistic effect in

headlines and advertisements

Verbrechen gestanden. Münchner Kaufmann vom Geschäftspartner erschlagen (*HA*)	*Crime admitted. Munich businessman killed by partner*
Wohnung mit Bad gesucht möglichst nahe Stadtzentrum	*Flat with bathroom required as close as possible to city centre*

(e) No article is used with adverbial genitives

e.g. *schweren Herzens* 'with a heavy heart', see **2.3.3d**.

4.9 Article use with phrasal verbs

The constructions used with phrasal verbs like *Abschied nehmen, in Druck geben, in Erfahrung bringen* are typically idiomatic, in particular in respect of the use of a definite article or no article with them, e.g. ***zum*** *Abschluss bringen* but ***zu*** *Ende bringen*, and a dictionary should be consulted. However, the following general rules apply:

(i) **Infinitives used as nouns** have a **definite article** in phrasal verbs with prepositions

ins Rollen kommen, **zum** Kochen bringen

(ii) **Feminine nouns** in **phrasal verbs with zu** have a **definite article**

zur Kenntnis bringen, **zur** Verfügung stehen

(iii) **Phrasal verbs with *außer*** and ***unter***, and most of those with ***in*** have **no article**

außer Gefahr sein, jdn. **unter** Druck setzen, jdn. **in** Verlegenheit bringen

However, those with ***in*** followed by an infinitive used as a noun do have an article, see **(i)** above

(iv) Most **phrasal verbs** with ***gehen***, ***halten*** and ***setzen*** have **no article**

in Erfüllung **gehen**, **in** Gang **halten**, **in** Brand **setzen**

(v) **Abstract nouns** used with ***haben*** have **no article**

Aufenthalt **haben**, Angst **haben**, Durst **haben**, Geduld **haben**, Mut **haben**

(vi) Phrasal verbs consisting of a **verb and an object noun with no preposition** have **no article**

Anspruch erheben, Antwort geben, Abschied nehmen, Krieg führen, Not leiden, Zeit sparen

(vii) An article is used with **phrasal verbs if the noun is qualified by an adjective**

This applies even if the phrasal verb normally lacks an article:

jdn. **in Gefahr** bringen	*lead sb. into danger*
jdn. **in** (eine) **große Gefahr** bringen	lead sb. into great danger
jdn. **in die größte Gefahr** bringen	*lead sb. into the greatest danger*

4.10 Article use with prepositions

Article use with prepositions is typically idiomatic. Usage in time phrases and phrasal verbs is dealt with in sections **4.5** and **4.9**. More detail, in particular concerning differences between the English and German use of articles in set phrases with prepositions, can be found in **Chapter 18** under the individual prepositions. In this section we deal with some cases where some general rules apply.

(i) The **definite article can be omitted** in prepositional phrases

if the following **noun is qualified** by a genitive or another prepositional phrase:

auf Anraten des Arztes	*on the advice of a doctor*
in Gegenwart von zwei Kollegen	in the presence of two colleagues
die Studie, die Smith noch **in Diensten** der Bank verfasste (*Spiegel*)	the study which Smith wrote in the service of the bank
unter Ausnutzung aller Möglichkeiten	*by exploiting all possibilities*

(ii) The indefinite article is often omitted in adverbial or adjectival phrases consisting of preposition and adjective plus noun. This is common where a set phrase is extended by an adjective and is characteristic of formal registers:

ein fahrender Virtuose **mit italienischem Namen** (*Th. Mann*)	*a travelling virtuoso with an Italian name*
ein Mann, der **solchem Rat** nicht folgte und **zu schrecklichem Ende** kam (*Hildesheimer*)	a man who failed to follow this kind of advice and met a terrible end
Wir erhielten den Betrag **in frei konvertierbarer Währung**	*We received the sum in a freely convertible currency*

This usage is also the norm in phrases with *mit* which are alternatives to adverbial genitives (see **2.3.3d**):

Sie ging **mit schnellem Schritt** (= schnellen Schrittes) über die Straße	*She crossed the road at a fast pace*

(iii) A few prepositions are used with no article in some or all of their uses. The most noteworthy (because of the differences to English) are the following:

mit is often used with no article when a part–whole relationship is

involved:

ein Zimmer **mit Bad**	ein Opel **mit Schiebedach**
ein Hut **mit breitem Rand**	eine Suppe **mit Wursteinlage**

ohne is used with no article in German in contexts where English has an indefinite article:

Er geht gern **ohne Hut**	Ich übersetzte den Text **ohne Wörterbuch**, **ohne Mühe**
Sie trat **ohne Brille** auf	Wie hast du die Tür **ohne Schlüssel** aufgemacht?

The other prepositions typically used without a following article belong to formal written registers. More information is given under the individual prepositions in **Chapter 18**.

ab	ab ersten/erstem Mai; ab Bahnhof; Preise ab Fabrik *ex works*
gemäß	Die Angelegenheit wurde gemäß Verordnung entschieden
infolge	Die Straße ist infolge schlechten Wetters gesperrt
kraft	Er handelte kraft Gesetzes
laut	Der Fahrer wurde laut Gesetz verurteilt
mangels	Der Angeklagte wurde mangels Beweises freigesprochen
per	per Einschreiben *by registered mail*; per Anhalter fahren *to hitch-hike*
pro	pro Stück; der Preis pro Tag *per day*, pro männlichen Angestellten
von … wegen	Diese Angelegenheit muss von Amts wegen geklärt werden
zwecks	Junge Dame möchte netten, gebildeten Herrn zwecks Heirat kennen lernen (*FAZ*)

Other determiners and pronouns

DETERMINERS are a limited set of small words used with NOUNS **to relate them to a particular context or situation**. They typically occupy the first position in a **NOUN PHRASE**, before any adjectives.

Table 5.1 The noun phrase: other determiners

Determiner	Adjective/adjectival phrase	Noun
diese	heidnische	Gottheit
einige	fleißige	Studenten
ihr	sehr elegantes	Ensemble
jedes	in der Bundesrepublik geborene	Kind

The determiners include the **DEFINITE** and **INDEFINITE ARTICLES**, which are dealt with in **Chapter 4**, and all other words used to determine nouns, like the **DEMONSTRATIVES** (*dieser*, *jener*, etc.), the **POSSESSIVES** (*mein*, *sein*, etc.), the **INTERROGATIVES** (e.g. *welcher?*) and indefinites (*einige*, *etliche*, etc.).

PRONOUNS are a limited set of small words which stand in place of NOUNS or NOUN PHRASES. In particular they stand for nouns or noun phrases which have already been mentioned or which do not need to be repeated in full. They include the **PERSONAL PRONOUNS**, which are dealt with in **Chapter 3**, **DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS**, **POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS**, **INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS** (asking questions), the **RELATIVE PRONOUNS** (the 'who', 'which' and 'that' words) and **INDEFINITE PRONOUNS**.

Determiners and pronouns qualify or stand in place of nouns and in

German, they typically DECLINE, i.e. they have endings which indicate the same grammatical categories as nouns – CASE, NUMBER and GENDER. Table 5.2 gives the DECLENSION of ***dieser*** 'this', which is one of the most frequent demonstratives and can be used as a determiner **or** a pronoun. **Many of the other determiners and pronouns have the same endings as *dieser*.**

Table 5.2 Declension of *dieser*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	dies **er**	dies **e**	dies **es**	dies **e**
Accusative	dies **en**	dies **e**	dies **es**	dies **e**
Genitive	dies **es**	dies **er**	dies **es**	dies **er**
Dative	dies **em**	dies **er**	dies **em**	dies **en**

In German, many of the same basic forms can be used as determiners **or** pronouns, e.g.:

Dieses Auto fährt sehr schnell (determiner)	**Dieses** fährt aber schneller (pronoun)
Mein Auto fährt sehr schnell (determiner)	**Meines** fährt aber schneller (pronoun)

A few of them (like *mein/meines* in the example above) have a different declension depending on whether they are being used as determiners or pronouns, which is why it is important to be aware of the difference between them.

This chapter deals with the following sets of determiners and pronouns:

- **demonstratives** (section **5.1**)
- **possessives** (section **5.2**)
- **interrogatives** (section **5.3**)
- the **relative pronouns** (section **5.4**)
- **indefinites**, **quantifiers** and **other determiners** and **pronouns** (section **5.5**)

5.1 Demonstratives

5.1.1 *der* 'that'

***der* is the most frequent demonstrative in spoken German**. It can be used to point in a general way to something distant or something near at hand and thus it can be the equivalent of both 'this' and 'that'.

(a) When used as a determiner, *der* has the same declension as the definite article

i.e. as given in **Table 4.2**. However, it differs from the definite article in speech because it is always stressed, e.g. *den* [de: n], *der* [de:ɐ], etc. It is thus quite distinct from the definite article, whose spoken forms are typically always unstressed and reduced, e.g. *' n*, *d'n* or *d' r*, etc., see **4.1.1**. Compare:

Ich möchte ein Stück von **d'r** Wurst	*I would like a piece of the sausage*
Ich möchte ein Stück von **der** [de:ɐ] Wurst	*I would like a piece of this/that sausage*

In written German the demonstrative force of *der* may sometimes be clear from the context, especially when a relative clause follows, e.g.:

Ich kann dir **die** Hefte der Zeitschrift schicken, die dir noch fehlen	*I can send you those issues of the journal which you haven't got yet*
Bei **der** Lehrerin würde ich auch nichts lernen	*I wouldn't learn anything from that teacher either*

In many contexts, though, it would be difficult to tell the demonstrative *der* apart from the definite article in writing, and *dieser* or *derjenige* is preferred. In colloquial speech the demonstrative force of *der* can be strengthened by adding *da* or *hier* after the noun, depending on whether 'this' or 'that' is meant, e.g. ***der** Mann **da*** 'that man', ***der***

*Mann **hier*** 'this man'. These forms are not used in writing.

In spoken German, especially in the South, *denen* is sometimes used rather than *den* in the dative plural, e.g. *Mit **denen** Sachen kann ich eh nichts anfangen*. This is considered non-standard.

(b) The declension of demonstrative *der* used as a pronoun

This is identical to the declension of the definite article, or *der* used as a determiner, **except in the genitive**, and in the **dative plural**. The forms are given in **Table 5.3**.

Table 5.3 Declension of the demonstrative pronoun *der*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	der	die	das	die
Accusative	den	die	das	die
Genitive	dessen	deren/derer	dessen	deren/derer
Dative	dem	der	dem	denen

The prepositions *halber*, *wegen* and *um. .. willen* have special compounded forms of the genitive with - *t* - inserted, e.g. *derenthalben*, *dessentwegen*, *um derentwillen*, etc., see **18.4.1d** and **18.4.4b**.

(c) The use of *der* as a pronoun

When it is being used as a pronoun, *der* cannot be confused with the definite article, as there is no noun following, and it is used freely in writing. It usually corresponds to English 'the one'/'this one'/'that one':

mein Wagen und **der** meines Bruders	*my car and my brother's*
Die Sache ist nämlich **die**: Er ist schon verheiratet	It's like this: he's already married
Diese Seife ist besser als **die**, die ich	This soap is better than the one I normally use
	We cannot attach so much

gewöhnlich gebrauche	importance to that
Wir können **dem** nicht so viel Bedeutung beimessen	Those (ones) are too expensive for me
Die sind mir zu teuer	*The book's lying on the table. Yes, on that one over there*
Das Buch liegt auf dem Tisch. Ja, auf **dem** da drüben	

(d) Pronominal *der* is often used instead of a third person pronoun

This usage is frequent in writing to refer to things, but to refer to persons it is typical of everyday colloquial speech and considered non-standard, see **3.4.2**:

Ist der Teller kaputt? Ja, **den** hat Astrid fallen lassen	*Is the plate broken? Yes, Astrid dropped it*
Keine Möwen. **Die** waren weiter draußen (*Grass*)	No gulls. They were further offshore
Hast du Peter gesehen? Ja, **der** ist gerade reingekommen	*Have you seen Peter? Yes, he's just come in.*

(e) *der* can be strengthened by the addition of *da* or *hier*

This usage is restricted to informal colloquial speech. It makes it more clear whether '**this** one (here)' or '**that** one (there)' is being referred to, e.g. *das da* 'that one' , *das hier* 'this one'.

(f) The genitive of the pronoun *der* can be used for a possessive pronoun to avoid ambiguity

i.e. where it might not be completely clear what *sein* or *ihr* could refer to:

Sie war die Tochter des	*She was the daughter of the writer*

Schriftstellers Thomas Mann und **dessen** viertes Kind (*Spiegel*)	*Thomas Mann and his fourth child*
Dennoch wurden sie alle geprägt von ihrer Stadt und **deren** geistiger Tradition	Nevertheless they were all moulded by their city and its intellectual tradition
Erboste Bauern nahmen britische LKW-Fahrer gefangen und plünderten **deren** Konvois (*Zeit*)	*Angry farmers held some British lorry-drivers captive and plundered their* (i.e. the lorry-drivers', not the farmers') *convoys*

In colloquial speech, the genitive of *der* is sometimes used instead of a possessive for emphasis, e.g. *Ich kann **deren** Mann nicht leiden.*

(g) The feminine singular and genitive plural forms *derer*

These are typically used to refer forwards, especially with a following relative clause (see also **5.4.1c**). The traditional rule that it can **only** be used in this way is no longer valid:

Unverändert niedrig ist die Zahl **derer**, die Asyl in Deutschland erhalten (*NüN*)	*The number of those who have been granted asylum in Germany is unchanged and still low*
Wie soll man **derer** habhaft werden, wenn sie jemanden umgefahren haben? (*FR*)	*How can they be detained when they have knocked somebody down?*

(h) The pronoun *das* is used as an emphatic form of *es*

This is linked to the fact that *es* cannot be stressed (see **3.6**). Like *es*, it can be used with either singular or plural forms of the verb *sein*. In the corresponding English constructions we distinguish between 'that' and 'those':

Das sind meine Bücher	*Those are my books*
Das ist mein Arm, meine Hand,	*That is my arm, my hand, my knee*

mein Knie

A form of the prepositional adverb is normally used rather than a preposition followed by the demonstrative pronoun e.g. *damit* 'with that', *darin* 'in that'. The stress is on the first syllable (see **3.5.2a**):

´ **Da** mit kann man die Büchse doch nicht aufmachen, oder?	*You can't open the can with that, can you?*

To refer to something near or something just mentioned, a prepositional adverb with *hier* - can be used, e.g. *hiermit* 'with this', *hierin* 'in this'

Hier über lässt sich nichts mehr sagen	*There is nothing more to be said about this*

Forms in *hie-*, e.g. *hiemit*, *hienach* are generally old-fashioned, but they are still occasionally found in Swiss or Austrian usage.

When a relative clause follows, a preposition followed by the demonstrative pronoun **is** used in written German (although the prepositional adverb may sometimes be heard in speech). See also **5.4.4**:

Ich richtete meine ganze Aufmerksamkeit **auf das** (*not* darauf), was er erklärte	*I focused my whole attention on what he was saying*

5.1.2 *dieser* 'this'

The declension of *dieser* is given in **Table 5.2**. There is an increasing tendency to use the form *diesen* in the genitive singular masculine and neuter of the determiner rather than *dieses* if the noun has the ending *-(e)s*, e.g. *im Februar dies **en** Jahres* (*MM*) (for *dies **es** Jahres*). However, this usage is not generally accepted as standard.

(a) As a determiner and a pronoun *dieser* typically refers to something near at hand

It thus generally corresponds to English 'this'. As a determiner, *dieser* occurs in both spoken and written German, but as a pronoun it is mainly used in writing since spoken German tends to use *der* in this function (see **5.1.1**):

Diese Erklärung ist unbefriedigend	*This explanation is unsatisfactory*
Dieser Junge arbeitet aber gut	That boy really does work well
Er hat den kleinen Wagen nicht gekauft, weil ihm **dieser** (*spoken*: **der hier**) viel besser gefallen hat	*He didn't buy the small car, because he liked this one much better*

dieser is often used simply to point to an object or person in contexts where the difference between near and distant (i.e. between 'this one' and 'that one') is not crucial. In such contexts it often corresponds to English 'that', e.g. *Warum hast du dieses Top gekauft?* 'Why did you buy this/that top?'

(b) The short form *dies* is commonly used for *dieses* as a pronoun

It refers to something close by or recent and its use corresponds closely to that of English 'this':

Dies geschieht nicht oft	Gerade **dies** hatte ich vergessen

dies, like *das*, can be used irrespective of gender or number, with a plural verb where appropriate: *Dies sind meine Schwestern*; *Dies ist meine Frau.*

The use of *dies* for *dieses* as a determiner in the nominative or accusative singular neuter is now old-fashioned, but it occurs occasionally in formal writing for stylistic effect, or to give a historical flavour, e.g. ***Dies*** *Werk malte Konrad Witz aus Basel* (*Borst*).

5.1.3 *jener* 'that'

jener declines like *dieser*, see **Table 5.2**, and also has the same declension whether it is used as a determiner or a pronoun. In modern usage it is largely restricted to formal written German, especially in the following contexts:

(a) to contrast with *dieser*

Es war nicht die Absicht, dieses oder **jenes** Verfahren zu verbieten (*SGT*)	*It was not the intention to forbid this procedure or that one*
Wir sprachen über dieses und **jenes** (*less formal*: über dies und das)	*We talked about this and that*

(b) to refer to something distant, but well-known

Werfen wir einen kurzen Blick über den Eisernen Vorhang **jener** Zeit (*Sonnenberg*)	*Let us cast a short glance at the Iron Curtain of those times*

(c) with a following relative clause

Deshalb hat er auch eine Menge Anhänger unter **jenen**, die Comedy mögen (*HMP*)	*That is why he has a lot of fans among those who like comedy*

5.1.4 *derjenige* 'that'

Both parts of *derjenige* decline, as shown in **Table 5.4**, the first part in the same way as the definite article (see **Table 4.2**), the second as a weak adjective (see **Table 6.4**).

Table 5.4 Declension of *derjenige*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural

Nominative	derjenige	diejenige	dasjenige	diejenigen
Accusative	denjenigen	diejenige	dasjenige	diejenigen
Genitive	desjenigen	derjenigen	desjenigen	derjenigen
Dative	demjenigen	derjenigen	demjenigen	denjenigen

It is used as an emphatic demonstrative determiner or pronoun, typically with a following restrictive relative clause, corresponding to English 'that (one), which/who'. Although it was originally more typical of formal and official registers, it is now quite frequent in speech as well as in writing.

Wir wollen **diejenigen** Schüler herausfinden, die musikalisch begabt sind	*We want to find those pupils who are musically gifted*
Beihilfen sollen nur **demjenigen** zufließen, der unter der Armutsgrenze lebt (*FR*)	*Assistance should only go to those who are living below the poverty line*

5.1.5 *derselbe* 'the same'

derselbe corresponds to English 'the same'. Both parts decline, as with *derjenige* (see **Table 5.5**).

Table 5.5 Declension of *derselbe*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	derselbe	dieselbe	dasselbe	dieselben
Accusative	denselben	dieselbe	dasselbe	dieselben
Genitive	desselben	derselben	desselben	derselben
Dative	demselben	derselben	demselben	denselben

Er besucht **dieselbe** Schule wie dein Bruder	*He goes to the same school as your brother*
Sind das **dieselben** ?	Are those the same?
Sie wohnt **im selben** Haus	She lives in the same house
Es läuft auf (ein und) **dasselbe** hinaus	*It all comes to the same thing*

Note that, unlike *derjenige*, it can be used with a contracted preposition, e.g. *am selben Tag, zur selben Zeit.*

Standard German insists on the distinction between *derselbe*, i.e. 'the very same', and *der gleiche*, i.e. 'one which is similar', e.g. *Er trägt* **den gleichen** *Hut* 'He is wearing the same hat', i.e. a similar one, whereas *Er trägt* **denselben** *Hut* would be nonsensical. However, this distinction is often ignored in speech and either are used in both senses. It is widely felt, though, that the distinction should be upheld, at least in writing.

5.1.6 *solch* and other equivalents of 'such'

solch- occurs in a number of forms:

- **inflected *solcher***, which declines like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**), except that in the genitive singular masculine and neuter it has the ending *-en*, e.g. *Der Vorzug solch* ***en*** *Spiel* ***es*** (*Th. Mann*).
- **endingless *solch***, used with an indefinite article: *solch ein Unsinn*
- ***solch*** - used after the indefinite article *ein* or another determiner, with the endings of an adjective: *ein solches Buch, jeder solche Gedanke, alle solchen Frauen*

(a) German equivalents of 'such' as a determiner

(i) the most frequent alternatives as a determiner are ***ein solcher*** in the **singular** and inflected ***solche*** in the **plural**. This applies to both written and spoken German:

Eine solche Auflockerung könnte dem politischen Diskurs gut bekommen (*Zeit*)	*Such a relaxation of tension could benefit the political debate*
Einen solchen Wagen würde ich nie kaufen	I would never buy a car like that
	You can tell people like that anything

Solchen Leuten kann man alles erzählen	*such big houses*
solche großen Häuser	

(ii) Inflected *solcher* as a determiner in the singular is found principally in formal registers. It has a rather old-fashioned or literary ring:

bei **solchem** Wetter	*in such weather*
ein Mann, der **solchem** Rat nicht folgte (*Hildesheimer*)	*a man who failed to follow such advice*

(iii) with a following adjective the most usual equivalent with singular count nouns followed by an adjective is *ein so*, or in informal register German *so ein* (see also **(vi)** below):

ein so großes Haus **so ein** großes Haus	}	*such a big house*

With plural count nouns and singular mass nouns followed by an adjective, inflected *solcher* is the norm in writing, but *so* is frequent in everyday speech:

so große Häuser (spoken) **solche** großen Häuser (written)	}	*such big houses*
bei **so** gutem Wetter (spoken) bei **solchem** guten Wetter (written)	}	*in such good weather*

(iv) In formal registers uninflected *solch* is not uncommon if an adjective follows. It also occurs in a few idiomatic phrases:

Das ist häufig die Gefahr nach **solch** guten Leistungen (*NUZ*)	*That is often the danger after such good results*
mit **solch** unermüdlichem Eifer	with such tireless enthusiasm
Solch dummes Gerede!	*Such stupid gossip!*

(v) In formal registers uninflected *solch* can be used as a determiner with a following indefinite article. This is more emphatic than if the article comes first:

Geprobt haben sie **solch** eine Situation allerdings nicht (*NUZ*).	*However, they haven't tested a situation like* **that**

Uninflected *solch* is sometimes used on its own in very formal registers before a singular neuter noun, e.g. *solch Wetter*. This sounds old-fashioned.

(vi) In informal colloquial speech, ***so ein*** is very frequent in the singular for 'such a', e.g. *in* **so einer** *Stadt*, **so ein** *Geschenk*. In the plural, simple *so* is frequent, e.g. *Das sind* **so** *Sachen*.

In practice, *so* and *ein* are used so often in rapid everyday speech that they have become fused and are interpreted as a single word ***son*** with its own endings, e.g. ***son*** *altes Haus*, ***sone*** *nette Person*, *mit* **sonem** *Kerl*, and this is even used in the plural, e.g. ***sone*** *frechen Gören*. These forms are not accepted in standard German and not used in writing.

(b) German equivalents of 'such' as a pronoun

(i) The most frequent alternatives are *solche* (plural) and *so einer* (singular):

Ich habe **solche** oft gesehen	*I've often seen ones like that*
So eines kann ich mir nicht leisten	*I can't afford one like that*

(ii) Singular *solcher* is used after *als*:

Der Fall als **solcher** interessiert mich	*The case as such interests me*

(iii) Singular (*k*) *ein solcher* is restricted to literary registers. In the singular it sounds rather stilted:

Sie hatte auch **einen solchen**	*She had one like that, too*
Leider haben wir **keine solchen** mehr	*I'm afraid we haven't got any more like that*

(c) The adjective *derartig* is a common, more emphatic alternative to *solch* -

It is used with *ein* in the singular, or with no article in either singular or plural:

Er fuhr mit **einer derartigen** Geschwindigkeit gegen die Mauer, dass …	*He drove into the wall at such a speed, that …*
Erfahrung im Umgang mit **derartiger** Kälte hat niemand (*Bednarz*)	Nobody has experience in dealing with that degree of cold
Derartige Gerüchte hören wir oft	*We often hear rumours like those*

If another adjective follows, *derartig* may be uninflected, e.g. *Er fuhr mit einer derartig(en) hohen Geschwindigkeit gegen die Mauer, dass…* In some contexts, though, there can be a difference in meaning. Compare *ein derartig dummes Geschwätz* (i.e. 'gossip which is stupid to such an extent') and *ein derartiges dummes Geschwätz* (i.e. 'such gossip which is stupid').

(d) *dergleichen* and *derlei*

dergleichen and *derlei* do not decline. They are used as determiners or pronouns meaning 'suchlike', 'that kind/sort of':

Dergleichen Behauptungen stören mich	*Assertions like that bother me*
nichts **dergleichen**	nothing of the kind
und **dergleichen** mehr (*abbrev.*: u.dgl.m.)	and so forth
	He had a long knife or something of the kind in his pocket

Er hatte ein langes Messer oder **dergleichen** in der Tasche	The strawberry blond Miss Leclerc didn't need tricks like that
Die rotblonde Miss Leclerc hatte **derlei** Tricks nicht nötig (*BILD*)	*She wasn't averse to that kind of thing*
Sie sah **derlei** nicht ungern (*Jacob*)	

5.2 Possessives

The POSSESSIVES indicate a relationship between two noun phrases where one in some sense 'belongs' to the other, e.g. ***mein*** *Buch* 'my book'; *die Stadt und* **ihre** *Geschichte* 'the city and its history'; *Ist das* **dein** Fahrrad oder **meines**? 'Is that your bicycle or mine?'

5.2.1 The forms and declension of the possessives

(a) The basic forms of the possessives

In German there is a basic form of the possessive pronouns and determiners for each grammatical PERSON, and these are given in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Basic forms of the possessives

	Person		
Singular	1st		mein
	2nd		dein
	3rd	masculine	sein
		feminine	ihr
		neuter	sein
Plural	1st		unser
	2nd	familiar	euer
		polite (sg./pl.)	Ihr
	3rd		ihr

(i) To refer back to **indefinites**, the **masculine** form ***sein*** is used,

e.g.:

Wer hat **seine** Zahnbürste vergessen?	*Who has forgotten their toothbrush?*
Niemand hatte **sein** Heft mit	*No-one had their exercise book with them*

As the examples show, English can use the third person plural possessive in contexts like this, as a gender-neutral form, but there is no direct equivalent of this in German. The use of the masculine form has been the subject of substantial criticism, as it can be regarded as discriminatory, but none of the suggested solutions has yet been generally accepted.

(ii) A demonstrative is sometimes used instead of a third person possessive to avoid ambiguity, see **5.1.1f**.

(b) When used as determiners the possessives have the same endings as the indefinite article

Table 5.7 gives the forms of *mein* 'my' and *unser* 'our'.

Table 5.7 Declension of the possessive determiners

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	mein	meine	mein	meine
Accusative	meinen	meine	mein	meine
Genitive	meines	meiner	meines	meiner
Dative	meinem	meiner	meinem	meinen
Nominative	unser	unsere	unser	unsere
Accusative	unseren	unsere	unser	unsere
Genitive	unseres	unserer	unseres	unserer
Dative	unserem	unserer	unserem	unseren

(i) The - ***er*** of ***unser*** and ***euer*** is part of the root and **not an ending**. As **Table 5.7** shows, the endings are attached to this root.

(ii) When ***unser*** and ***euer*** have an ending, the - ***e*** - **of the root is often dropped**, e.g. *unsrer*, *unsren*, *eurer*, *euren*. Alternatively, the - *e*- of the endings - *en* or *-em* may be dropped, e.g. *unsern*, *unserm*, *euern*, *euerm*.

With ***unser***, the full forms, as given in the table, are the more usual ones in written German, although the reduced forms, which are the norm in speech, are quite permissible.

With ***euer***, the forms with no - *e*- in the root, i.e. *euren*, *eurer*, *eures*, *eurem*, are by far the most common in both spoken and written German.

In the genitive singular masculine and neuter the ending *-en* is now sometimes found if the noun has the ending *-(e)s*, e.g. *die Launen meinen Bruders*. This usage is increasingly common but it is generally considered to be incorrect.

(c) When used as pronouns, the possessives have the endings of *dieser*

Table 5.8 gives the full forms of *meiner* 'mine' and *unserer* 'ours'.

Table 5.8 Declension of the possessive pronouns

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	meiner	meine	meines	meine
Accusative	meinen	meine	meines	meine
Genitive	meines	meiner	meines	meiner
Dative	meinem	meiner	meinem	meinen
Nominative	unser	unsere	unser	unsere
Accusative	unseren	unsere	unser	unsere
Genitive	unseres	unserer	unseres	unserer
Dative	unserem	unserer	unserem	unseren

(i) Unlike the possessive determiners, the possessive pronouns have endings in the nominative singular masculine and the

nominative/accusative singular neuter (i.e. *mein* ***er***, *mein* ***es***). Compare:

Das ist nicht **mein** Hut, sondern **deiner**

Hast du **dein** Fahrrad? Ich sehe **mein(e)s** nicht

Seine Sammlung ist größer als **meine**

Ihr Garten ist größer als **uns(e)rer**

Er sprach mit **meinen** Eltern, ich mit **seinen**

Ich nehme **uns(e)ren** Wagen. In **seinem** habe ich immer Angst

(ii) The - *e*- of the nominative/accusative neuter ending - *es* is often dropped in writing, and almost always in speech: *meins*, *deins*. With *unseres* and *eueres* the - *e*- of the ending is dropped: *unsers*, *euers*. Otherwise, *unserer* and *euerer* can drop the - *e*- of the root or the ending as with the possessive determiner, see **(b)** above.
(iii) Endingless forms of the possessive are occasionally found in set phrases, archaic expressions or poetic language:

Dein ist mein Herz! Die Rache ist **mein** Die Welt ist **unser**
Er hat **Mein** und **Dein** nie unterscheiden können

(d) Alternative forms of the possessive pronoun

There are two alternatives to the possessive pronouns *meiner*, *deiner*, etc. These have the form of adjectives used after a definite article.

(i) In the first alternative adjective endings can simply be added to the basic possessive, e.g.:

der meine/der Meine 'mine'; *der deine/der Deine* ' yours'; *der uns(e)re/der Uns(e)re* 'ours', etc., e.g. *Seine Sammlung ist größer*

als die meine/Meine

(ii) In the second alternative the adjective has *-ig-* inserted between the basic possessive and the adjective ending, e.g.:

*der mein **ige** /der Mein **ige*** 'mine', *der dein **ige** /Dein **ige*** 'yours', *der uns(e)r **ige** /Uns(e)r **ige*** 'ours', etc.

Both these forms can be spelled with a small or a capital initial letter (see **21.2.1g**). They are found almost exclusively in formal written German and are much less frequent than *meiner*, etc. The first (*der meine*, etc.) is rather more emphatic than *meiner*, etc., while the second is current mainly in set phrases, e.g. *die Deinigen* 'your people' (i.e. your family); *Ich habe das Meinige getan* 'I've done my bit'.

5.2.2 The use of the possessives

In a few contexts German and English differ in the use of possessives.

(a) A definite article is often used to refer to parts of the body and articles of clothing

e.g. *Sie hat sich **den** Arm gebrochen* 'She has broken her arm'. Details are given in section **4.6**.

(b) Some idiomatic equivalents

In some commonly used types of context German expresses possession in a different way to English:

Das gehört mir. Gehört das dir?	*That's mine. Is that yours?*
ein Freund von mir/einer meiner Freunde	a friend of mine friends of mine
Freunde von mir	*That's a book of mine*
Das ist eins von meinen Büchern	

5.3 Interrogatives

INTERROGATIVES are words used to ask a question. In English they typically begin with *wh-*, like *which* or *who*.

5.3.1 *welcher* 'which'

(a) *welcher* can be used as a determiner or a pronoun

(i) It declines in exactly the same way as *dieser*, see **Table 5.2**, and the forms are the same whether it is used as a determiner or a pronoun.

Welches Bier willst du trinken?	*Which beer do you want to drink?*
Welchen Zug nehmen wir denn?	Which train shall we take?
Aus **welchem** Land kommt sie denn?	Which country does she come from?
Welcher berühmte Schriftsteller hat diesen Roman geschrieben?	Which famous author wrote this novel?
Hier sind zwei gute Weine. **Welchen** möchtest du zuerst probieren?	Here are two good wines. Which one would you like to try first?
Er fragte mich, **welchen** (Wein) ich zuerst probieren wollte	*He asked me which (wine) I wanted to try first*

(ii) In formal written German the endingless form ***welch*** is sometimes used before an adjective, as an alternative to the declined form:

Welch berühmter Schriftsteller hat diesen Roman geschrieben?	*What famous author wrote this novel?*
Die Künstler zeigten, **welch** reiches Kulturgut sie mitbrachten (*MM*)	The artists showed what cultural riches they had brought with them

Der Smogalarm machte erneut deutlich, in **welch hohem** Maße die Luft mit Giftstoffen verseucht ist (*MM*)	*The smog alarm made it clear once again to what high degree the air is polluted with poisonous substances*

(iii) In the **genitive singular masculine** and **neuter** the determiner can have the ending - ***en*** rather than - ***es*** **if** the following noun has the ending *-(e)s*:

Welch **en/** Welch **es** Kindes Buch ist das?

Innerhalb welch **en** Zeitraumes müssen nicht bestandene Prüfungen wiederholt werden?

(*Universität Innsbruck*)

(iv) *welcher* can have the **neuter singular form *welches*** when it is used as a **pronoun** in an **indefinite sense** with the verb *sein*, irrespective of the gender and number of the noun it refers to:

Welches ist die jüngere Schwester? **Welches** ist der längste Fluss in Amerika?	**Welches** sind die besten Zeitungen?

Using endings in agreement with the following noun would be equally possible in these examples: ***Welche*** *ist die jüngere Schwester?* etc.

(b) *welcher* can be used in exclamations with the force of English 'What (a)… !'

Welcher Unterschied! **Welche** Überraschung!	**Welcher** schöne Tag! **Welchen** unglaublichen Unsinn hat er geredet!

Endingless *welch* can be used instead of declined *welcher* in exclamations if *ein* or an adjective follows:

Welch ein Unterschied!	**Welch (ein) schöner** Tag!

Welch eine Überraschung!	**Welch unglaublichen** Unsinn hat er geredet!

This exclamatory use of *welch* (*er*) is mainly found in formal German. *was für (ein)* (see **5.3.2**) is more current in speech.

The form ***welcher*** has a number of other uses:

- as a relative pronoun (= 'who', 'which'), see **5.4.2**
- as an indefinite (= 'some', 'any'), see **5.5.26**.

5.3.2 *was für ein* 'what kind of (a)'

(a) *was für ein* can be used as a determiner or a pronoun

(i) When *was für ei n* is used as a **determiner** in the singular, *ein* declines like the indefinite article, see **Table 4.3**:

Was für ein Mensch ist sie denn?	*What sort of person is she?*
Was für einen Wein trinken Sie am liebsten?	What sort of wine do you like to drink most?
Aus **was für einer** Familie stammt er?	What kind of a family does he come from?
Sie können sich denken, in **was für einer** schwierigen Lage ich mich befand	*You can imagine what (kind of) an awkward situation I found myself in*

The case of *ein* depends on the role of the noun phrase in the sentence, not on the case usually taken by the preposition *für*.

(ii) Simple *was fü r*, without *ein*, is used in the plural and before mass nouns in the singular

Was für ausländische Marken	*What kinds of foreign stamps do*

haben Sie?	*you have?*
Was für Käse soll ich kaufen?	*What kind of cheese shall I buy?*

(iii) When used as a **pronoun**, *was für einer* 'what kind (of a one)' has the **endings** of the **pronoun *einer*** given in **Table 5.10**:

Er hat sich ein neues Auto gekauft. **Was für ein(e)s** ?	*He has bought a new car. What kind?*

(iv) In the plural *was für welche* is used

Ich habe Blumen gebracht. **Was für welche** ?	*I have brought some flowers. What kind?*

was für welcher is used in place of *was für einer* in the singular in colloquial speech, especially in North Germany, e.g. *Er hat einen neuen Wagen gekauft. Was für welchen?*

For the use of *was für* (*ein*) in concessive clauses, see **17.6.2c**.

(b) *was* is often separated from *für ein*

The phrase with *für* then follows the verb. This alternative is especially frequent in speech, but the construction is also used in writing:

Was hast du denn **für ein** Auto gekauft?

Was sind das **für** Vögel?

(c) *was für ein* can be used in exclamations (= 'What (a) …!')

It is in practice commoner than *welcher* (see **5.3.1b**), especially in less formal registers. In this usage the separated form is more frequent:

Was für eine Chance!	*What a chance!*

Was für herrliche Blumen!	What lovely flowers!
Er ist ein Schauspieler – und **was für einer** !	He's an actor – and what an actor!
Was sind das **für** wunderschöne Häuser!	*What lovely houses these are!*

If there is a verb in these exclamations, it may, alternatively, go to the end, as in a subordinate clause, e.g. *Was für wunderschöne Häuser das **sind** !*

(d) In colloquial speech *was für einer* is often used for *welcher* 'which'

This usage is not accepted as standard German.

Was für ein Kleid ziehst du an?	*Which dress are you going to wear?*

5.3.3 *wer, was* 'who', 'what'

(a) *wer* and *was* are only used as pronouns

(i) ***wer***, like English 'who', only refers to **persons**. It does not distinguish gender and it has the following case forms:

Nominative	wer?
Accusative	wen?
Genitive	wessen?
Dative	wem?

Wer hat diesen Brief geschrieben?	*Who wrote this letter?*
Wen hast du heute gesprochen?	Who(m) did you speak to today?
Wem wollten sie vorhin helfen?	Who(m) did they want to help just now?
Mit **wem** hast du gespielt?	

Wessen Bücher sind das?	Who(m) did you play with?
Ich kann Ihnen sagen, **wer** gespielt hat	Whose books are those? *I can tell you who was playing*

(ii) ***was***, like English 'what', only refers to **things**. Its only case form is the genitive ***wessen***?

Was bewegt sich dort im Gebüsch?	*What is moving there in the bushes?*
Was hat sie dir zum Geburtstag geschenkt?	What did she give you for your birthday?
Wessen schämst du dich?	What are you ashamed of?
Weißt du, **was** er getan hat?	*Do you know what he did?*

(iii) The genitive form ***wessen***, whether referring to people or things, is felt to be clumsy and tends to be avoided nowadays, even in written German. Thus *Wem gehören diese Bücher?* is used rather than *Wessen Bücher sind das?* and *Warum schämst du dich?* rather than *Wessen schämst du dich?*

As *was* has no dative, a paraphrase has to be used in contexts where it would be needed, e.g.:

Welcher Ursache kann man seinen Erfolg zuschreiben?	*To what can one ascribe his success?* (Literally: 'To what cause… ?')

(b) Nominative *wer* and *was* are followed in most contexts by a singular verb

(i) Compare the examples in **(a)** above and the following:

Wer **kommt** denn morgen?	*Who's coming tomorrow?*
Was **liegt** dort in der Ecke?	*What's that lying there in the corner?*

(ii) However, with *sein* the appropriate singular or plural form of

the verb is used, as in English:

Wer **ist** das an der Tür?	*Who's that at the door?*
Wer **sind** diese Leute?	Who are those people?
Was **ist** der Vogel da?	What's that bird there?
Was **sind** die längsten Flüsse der Welt?	*What are the longest rivers in the world?*

(iii) To emphasize quantity, *alles* is often added to sentences with *wer* and *was*. This usage is typical of colloquial speech:

Wen kennen Sie hier **alles** ?	*What people do you know here?*
Was hat er denn **alles** gefragt?	*What were the things he asked?*

(c) *was* is not used in combination with most prepositions

The compound forms *wo* (*r*) + preposition, e.g. *woran*, *womit*, *wozu*, etc., are used instead.

(i) These forms are like those of the prepositional adverb with *da(r)*-, see **3.5**:

Womit schreibst du?	*What are you writing with?*
Worüber sprechen Sie?	What are you talking about?
Weißt du, **worauf** wir warten?	*Do you know what we are waiting for?*

Some prepositions are not used in the form with *wo(r)* -: *außer, gegenüber, hinter, neben, ohne, seit, zwischen.*

(ii) The forms *wodurch*, *wonach*, *wovon* and *wozu* can only be used if there is no idea of movement involved, e.g.:

Wodurch weiß er das?	*How is it that he knows that?*
Wonach soll man sich denn richten?	By what is one to be guided?
Wovon sollen wir leben?	What are we to live on?
	What is that used for?

Wozu gebraucht man das?

Compare: *durch was?* 'through what?', *von wo?* or *woher?* 'where.. . from?', *wohin?* 'where.. . to?'

(iii) In colloquial German *was* is often used with a preposition instead of *wo* (*r*) + preposition, e.g. *Von was sollen wir leben? Mit was schreibst du?* This usage is very frequent in speech, but it is not regarded as acceptable in standard German, and avoided in writing.

(d) *wer* and *was* are often used in exclamations

Wer hätte so was erwartet!	*Who would have expected such a thing!*
Wem hat er nicht alles geholfen!	Who(m) hasn't he helped!
Was haben wir gelacht!	How we laughed!
Was er nicht alles tut!	*The things he does!*

(e) *was* can be followed by an adjective used as a noun, with the neuter ending - *es*

See **6.2.4** for further details on these forms. The adjective is separated from *was* and placed later in the sentence:

Was haben sie **Wichtiges** besprochen?	*What important matters did they discuss?*
Was ist **Komisches** dran?	What's funny about it?
Was könnt ihr hier **anderes** erwarten? (*Fallada*)	*What else can you expect here?*

(f) *was* can be used in the sense of 'why?' or 'what for?'

This usage is typical of informal speech:

Was sitzt ihr da rum?	*What are you doing just sitting around?*

was used like this often carries a tone of reproach.

(g) Idiomatic differences between German and English

In a few contexts German has *wie* where English uses 'what'.

Wie ist Ihr Name, bitte?	*What is your name, please?*
Wie heißt Ihr Bruder?	What's your brother called?
Wie ist das Buch?	*What's the book like?*

wer and ***was*** have a number of other uses:

(i) as relative pronouns (= 'who', 'which', 'that') in some contexts, see **5.4.3** and **5.4.5**.
(ii) in some concessive clauses (i.e. = 'whoever', 'whatever'), see **17.6.2**.
(iii) colloquially, as an indefinite (i.e. = 'someone'), see **5.5.27**.

5.4 Relative pronouns

RELATIVE PRONOUNS introduce subordinate clauses (called RELATIVE CLAUSES) which describe or qualify nouns, e.g. *die Frau, **die** heute kommt* 'the woman **who** is coming today'; *das Buch, **das** ich gerade lese* 'the boo **which** I am just reading'. As they qualify nouns they have the same function in practice as adjectives.

In English, we often drop a relative pronoun, especially in speech, e.g. The book (**which** *)* I am just reading. In German, by contrast, the relative pronoun is **never** omitted.

5.4.1 *der* 'who', 'which', 'that'

(a) *der* is the most frequent relative pronoun in German

der declines to indicate **gender**, **number** and **case**. Its forms are given in **Table 5.9**; they are almost identical to those of the demonstrative pronoun *der*, see **5.1.1**.

Table 5.9 Declension of the relative pronoun *der*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Nominative	der	die	das	die
Accusative	den	die	das	die
Genitive	dessen	deren	dessen	deren
Dative	dem	der	dem	denen

der takes its **gender** and **number** from the noun it refers to, e.g.:

der Mann, **der** heute zu uns kommt	(**masculine**)
die Frau, **die** heute zu uns kommt	(**feminine**)
das Kind, **das** heute zu uns kommt	(**neuter**)
die Leute, **die** heute zu uns kommen	(**plural**)

Its **case** is determined by the **role** it plays in the **relative clause**:

der Mann, **der** zu uns kommt	(**subject** of *kommt*)
den Mann, **den** ich kenne	(**accusative object** of *kenne*)
der Mann, **dem** ich helfen musste	(**dative object** of *helfen*)
der Mann, mit **dem** sie gekommen ist	(after **preposition** *mit*)

(b) Relative clauses are less frequent in spoken German than in writing

In speech, a construction with a main clause (and the verb in second place) and the demonstrative pronoun *der* is often used rather than a subordinate relative clause (with the verb at the end). This is usually considered to be poor style in writing, unless colloquial speech is being

imitated, as in the following examples:

Er trug ein Heft bei sich, **in dem** standen die Namen der fünfzig Verräter (*E.W. Heine*)	*He had a little book with him in which the names of the fifty traitors were written down*
Es gibt Leute, **die** freuen sich über die Fahrt (*Bichsel*)	*There are people who are pleased about the trip*

In formal registers a full relative clause would be expected, e.g. *Er trug ein Heft bei sich*, **in dem** die Namen der fünfzig Verräter standen.

(c) The genitive of *der*

(i) The genitive forms of *der* correspond to English 'whose' or 'of which':

die Frau, **deren** Namen ich immer vergesse	*the woman whose name I always forget*
ein Mann, von **dessen** Erfolg ich hörte	a man of whose success I heard
Sie blickten auf das Mietshaus gegenüber, in **dessen** Erdgeschoss sich eine Schreibwarenhandlung befand	*They looked out on the apartment house opposite, on the ground floor of which there was a stationer's*

It is incorrect (though a common mistake by Germans) to decline *dessen* and *deren*, e.g. *ein Mann, von dessen* (not *dess* ***em***) *Erfolg ich hörte.*

(ii) In the genitive plural and the genitive singular feminine *derer* is sometimes used rather than *deren*:

Für viele Medikamente gelten Wartezeiten, innerhalb **derer** die Tiere nicht geschlachtet werden dürfen (*BrZ*)	*For many medicines waiting periods are prescribed during which the animals are not allowed to be slaughtered*
das Vorbild der deutschen	the example of the German

Widerstandskämpfer, **derer** zum 20. Juli überall gedacht wurde (*RhZ*)	resistance fighters who were remembered everywhere on the 20th of July
die ungewöhnliche Autorität, **derer** sich die katholischen Bischöfe in Polen erfreuen (*Spiegel*)	*the extraordinary authority which is enjoyed by the Catholic bishops in Poland*

This usage was traditionally considered incorrect, but *derer* is in practice now at least as frequent as *deren*, especially in the genitive plural. However, *deren* is preferred if a noun follows: *die Frau*, **deren** *Tochter du kennst.*

(iii) After prepositions, the shorter form *der* can be used as an alternative to *deren*:

eine lange Übergangszeit von sechs Jahren, innerhalb **der** die Länder die Juristenausbildung umstellen können (*Zeit*)	*a long transitional period of six years, within which the* Länder *can reorganize the training of lawyers*

(iv) Constructions of the type 'one of whom', 'most of which', 'some of which' correspond to constructions with *von denen* in German:

die Studenten, **von denen** ich **einen** nicht kenne	*the students, one of whom I don't know*
eine Anzahl Jungen, **von denen** ich **die meisten** kenne	a number of boys, most of whom I know
viele Bilder, **von denen einige** ganz gut sind	*a lot of pictures, some of which are quite good*

(v) *dessen* and *deren* are compounded with - *halben*, *-wegen* and *-willen* with the insertion of a - *t-*, e.g. *derentwegen*, *um dessentwillen*:

ein charismatischer, weltberühmter Darsteller,	*a charismatic, world-famous actor on whose account women*

dessentwegen die Frauen in Ohnmacht fallen (*Presse*)	*faint*

(d) Relative pronouns with first and second person personal pronouns

Normal usage is for the pronoun to be repeated in the relative clause, e.g.:

du, **der/die du** ja nicht alles wissen kannst	*you, who cannot know everything*
für mich, **die ich** noch gar nicht ordentlich lesen konnte (*Dönhoff*)	for me, who wasn't yet able to read properly
ich, **der ich** seit 20 Jahren seinem Volke diene	*I, who have been serving my people for 20 years*

The alternative construction with a third person verb, e.g. *ich, **der** seit 20 Jahren seinem Volke **dient*** (*FAZ*), is possible, but less frequent in practice. It is most common when the relative pronoun is separated from the personal pronoun by other words, e.g. *Was kannst du tun, der nicht alles wissen kann.*

5.4.2 *welcher* 'who', 'which', 'that'

(a) *welcher* is chiefly used as a stylistic variant of *der*

It has the same endings as *dieser*, see **Table 5.2**, but it is not normally used in the genitive. It is restricted to formal written German, and even there it is much less frequent than *der*.

die Gerüchte, **welche** über die wirtschaftliche Lage meines Vaters am Orte umgelaufen waren (*Th. Mann*)	*the rumours which had been circulating in the town about my father's financial situation*
	The gentleman always acted as if

Der Herr tat doch immer so, als umgäbe ihn eine vielköpfige Familie, **welcher** er Anweisungen zu geben hätte (*Grass*)	*he was surrounded by a large family to which he had to give instructions*

It is perhaps most often used now to avoid repeating forms of *der*, e.g. *Die, **welche** zuletzt kamen, waren erschöpft.* However, it is never necessary in such contexts – compare, as perfectly acceptable (see **5.4.5b**): *Die, **die** gingen, haben in der DDR mehr verändert, als die, **die** geblieben sind* (*FR*).

(b) *welcher* is used before a noun which refers back to part or whole of the preceding clause

This use, which is limited to formal registers, corresponds to that of English 'which'. In this construction *welcher* agrees with the following noun for case, number and gender:

Er wurde zum Stadtdirektor ernannt, **welches Amt** er gewissenhaft verwaltete	*He was appointed town clerk, which office he administered conscientiously*
Er sagte ihr, sie müsse den Betrag sofort zurückzahlen, **welcher Forderung** sie dann auch nachging	*He told her she had to repay the amount immediately, which request she then complied with*

5.4.3 was as a relative pronoun

In a few contexts, *was* is used as a relative pronoun. Its only case form when used like this is the genitive *wessen*, although this tends to be avoided. It occurs in the following cases:

(a) After neuter indefinites

i.e. *alles*, *einiges*, *etwas*, *folgendes*, *manche s*, *nichts*, *vieles*, *weniges*:

Nichts/Etwas/Alles, **was** er sagte, war mir neu	*Nothing/Something/Everything (that) he said was new to me*
Sie mieden alles, **was** ihre Unabhängigkeit einschränken könnte (*Walser*)	*They avoided anything which might restrict their independence*

After *etwas*, *das* can be used rather than *was*:

Da tat Gregorius etwas, **das** er von sich aus noch nie getan hatte (*P. Mercier*)	*Then Gregorius did something which he had never done before of his own accord*
Ich erinnere mich an etwas Merkwürdiges, **das** er sagte	*I remember something strange that he said*

das is occasionally found after other indefinites, but this usage is considered incorrect.

> (i) After prepositions, forms of *was* are usually replaced by the prepositional adverb in *wo* (*r*)-, see **5.4.4b**.
> (ii) In colloquial speech *was* is often heard for *das* to refer to a neuter noun, e.g. *das Buch*, **was** *er mir geliehen hat*. This usage is not standard.

(b) After a neuter adjective used as a noun referring to something indefinite

Das Richtige, **was** man sich ansehen müsste, finden wir nie (*Fallada*)	*The right things* [in museums] *that one ought to look at, we never find*
Das Erste, **was** Evelyn sah, waren Mariannes Augen (*Baum*)	*The first thing Evelyn saw was Marianne's eyes*

Less frequently, *das* is used in these contexts, e.g. *Das Gute,* ***das*** *er getan hat, wird ihn überdauern*. However, *was* is always used after superlatives, e.g. *Das Beste*, **was** du machen könntest.

(c) After the indefinite demonstrative *das*

Eben **das**, **was** uns fehlte, hat er uns verweigert	*He denied us just what we were lacking*

If *das* is in the genitive or dative, or after a preposition, it cannot be omitted. This differs from English, where often only 'what' is needed. Compare:

Ich hörte nichts von **dem**, **was** er mir sagte	*I didn't hear anything of what he said to me*
eine Antwort auf **das**, **was** er gerade dachte (*Walser*)	an answer to what he was just thinking
ein eifriger Leser **dessen**, **was** neu auf den Markt kommt (*Zeit*)	*a keen reader of what is new on the market*

(d) To refer back to a whole clause

Er hat sein Examen bestanden, **was** mich sehr erstaunt	*He has passed his examination, which surprises me very much*
Er sagte, er hätte mich damals gesehen, **was** ich nicht glauben konnte	*He said he had seen me then, which I couldn't believe*

5.4.4 Relative pronouns with prepositions

(a) The usual construction is to introduce the relative clause with *der* following the preposition

The relative pronoun *der* is in the **case** determined by the **preposition** (in the example below the **dative**, since *mit* is followed by the dative), and its **number** and **gender** are determined by the noun which the clause qualifies, in this example **masculine singular**, agreeing with *der Ball*:

der Ball, **mit dem** der Junge spielt	{	*the ball with which the boy is playing* the ball which the boy is playing with *the ball the boy is playing with*

The German construction corresponds closely to that of the first English equivalent given, which is more typical of formal registers than those which are very common in spoken English with a 'stranded' preposition at the end of the clause, possibly with the relative pronoun omitted entirely, as in the last equivalent. Constructions like these are not possible in German, which only has the one relative clause construction in standard usage. Compare these further examples:

die Frau, **auf die** Sie warten	{	*the woman for whom you are waiting* *the woman (who) you are waiting for*
der Stuhl, **auf den** du dich setzen wolltest	{	*the chair on which you wanted to sit down* *the chair (which) you wanted to sit down on*
der Stuhl, **auf dem** du sitzt	{	*the chair on which you are sitting* *the chair (which) you are sitting on*
die Stadt, **in der** ich wohne	{	*the town in which I live* *the town (which) I live in*

(b) The form *wo* (*r*) + preposition as a relative pronoun

The forms of the prepositional adverb in *wo* (*r*)- (e.g. *worauf*, *woran*, *wovon*, etc., see **5.3.3c**) are used as relative pronouns in some constructions.

(i) *wo(r)* + preposition is used in those contexts where *was* is used as a relative pronoun (see **5.4.3**):

etwas, **woran** ich mich nicht mehr recht erinnern konnte	*something which I couldn't remember properly any more*
Es gibt nichts, **womit** man diese Ablehnung begründen könnte	There is no reason by which this refusal might be justified
Es kam etwas, **womit** kein Mensch auf der Welt hätte rechnen können (*Süßkind*)	Something came which nobody on earth could have reckoned with
Er hat sein Examen bestanden, **worüber** ich mich freue	*He has passed his examination, which I am very pleased about*

Preposition + *das* (*dem*, if the preposition takes the dative) can be used instead of *wo(r)* + preposition, most frequently after *etwas*, e.g.:

etwas, **an das** ich mich nicht mehr recht erinnern konnte

nichts, **mit dem** man diese Ablehnung begründen könnte

Preposition + *was* is not uncommon in these contexts, but it is principally colloquial and not universally accepted as standard:

etwas, **an was** ich mich nicht mehr recht erinnern konnte

nichts, **mit was** man diese Ablehnung begründen könnte

(ii) *wo* (*r*) + preposition used to be a common alternative to the preposition followed by *der* to refer to things, e.g. *das Heim*, **worin** *ich geboren wurde* (*Th. Mann*). This usage is now unusual even in formal registers.

The use of the prepositional adverb with *da(r)* - (e.g. *darauf*, *daran*, cf. **3.5**) as a relative pronoun to refer to things, e.g. *der Dolch*, **damit** *er sich erstach*, is now wholly obsolete.

(iii) *wo(r)* + preposition is sometimes split (in a similar way to

da(r) + preposition, see **3.5.2c**), e.g.:

etwas, **wo** ich mich nicht **mit** abfinden kann (*standard:* **womit** ich mich nicht abfinden kann)	*That is something I can't get used to*

This usage is widespread in speech, especially in North Germany, but it is considered non-standard.

(c) In spoken German *wo* is often combined with a prepositional adverb later in the clause

Da in der Ecke ist das Sofa, **wo** du **d(a)rauf** schlafen kannst (*standard:* **auf dem** du schlafen kannst)	*There in the corner is the sofa you can sleep on*

This is probably the most frequent alternative in informal colloquial speech, but it is considered unacceptable in formal, especially written registers. The variation on this construction with a simple preposition, e.g. *der Ball*, **wo** der Junge **mit** *spielt* is if anything even less acceptable, although it, too, is very frequent in speech.

5.4.5 German equivalents of 'the one who', 'he/she who', 'that which'

There are a number of German equivalents for these English constructions.

(a) *wer* and *was* can be used in generalizations

Wer viele Freunde hat, ist glücklich	*Whoever has many friends is happy*
Wer wagt, gewinnt	Who dares wins
Und **was** noch schlimmer ist, er	And what is worse, he doesn't

merkt es selber nicht	realize it himself
Was du sagst, stimmt nicht	*What you say is not right*

If there is a difference in case or construction between the two clauses, an appropriate demonstrative pronoun can be added to begin the main clause:

Wen es zum Lehrerberuf hinzieht, **der** bevorzugt eher die philosophischen Fächer	*Those who are attracted to the teaching profession favour Arts subjects*
Was wir getan haben, **darüber** müssen wir auch Rechenschaft ablegen	*What we have done we shall also have to answer for*

Often, though, no such clarifying demonstrative pronoun is used:

> **Wen** es zum Lehrerberuf hinzieht, bevorzugt eher die philosophischen Fächer (*Zeit*)

(b) Relative pronouns following demonstrative pronouns

The following alternatives are found:

(i) demonstrative *der* followed by relative *der*. This is the commonest alternative, despite the repetition:

Die, **die** gingen, haben in der DDR mehr verändert, als **die**, **die** blieben (*FR*)	*Those who left changed more in the GDR than those who stayed*

(ii) in formal registers, demonstrative *der* can be followed by relative *welcher*:

Die, **welche** ich kaufen wollte, waren mir zu teuer	*The ones I wanted to buy were too expensive for me*

(iii) demonstrative *derjenige* followed by relative *der* (or, in formal registers, *welcher*). This is frequent in both speech and writing:

Diejenigen, **die** (welche) in den hinteren Reihen saßen, konnten nichts sehen	*The ones who were sitting in the back rows couldn't see anything*

(iv) demonstrative *jener* followed by relative *der* (or *welcher*). This is not uncommon in formal writing:

bei **jenen**, **die** es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht haben, Schüler zu fördern (*MM*)	*with those who have made it their business to support schoolchildren*

(v) *der* can be used as a compound relative (e.g. 'he who'). This is common in speech:

Die hier sitzen, sind Verfluchte (*Wolf*)	*Those who are sitting here are cursed*
Der ihm Brötchen und Bockwurst verkaufte, kam aus Winsen an der Luhe (*Surminski*)	*The man who sold him rolls and sausage came from Winsen an der Luhe*

5.4.6 Other forms of the relative pronoun

(a) To refer to a place, *wo* can be used as a relative pronoun

This is an acceptable alternative to using *der* with a preposition:

die Stadt, **wo** (*or:* in der) ich wohne	*the town where I live*

If motion to or from a place is involved, *wohin* or *woher* are used:

die Stadt, **wohin** (*or:* in die) ich	*the town to which I went*

ging das Dorf, **woher** (*or:* aus dem) er kam	*the village from which he came*

The use of *wo* as a general relative pronoun (e.g. *die Frau,* ***wo*** *jetzt kommt*) is a very widespread non-standard regionalism.

(b) Usage with time words

In such contexts English often uses *when* as a relative. A number of alternatives exist in German, depending on register:

(i) Preposition with *der* is the most widely accepted form for writing:

Den Tag, **an dem** er ankam, werde ich nie vergessen	*I shall never forget the day when he arrived*
in einer Zeit, **in der** die Jugend immer unabhängiger wird	*at a time when young people are becoming more and more independent*

(ii) *als* (for past time) or *wenn* (for present or future time) are possible alternatives. *da* is sometimes used in formal (especially literary) German:

In dem Augenblick, **als** der Hund aufsprang, schrie er (*Valentin*)	*At the moment when the dog jumped up, he cried out*
an seinem nächsten Geburtstag, **wenn** er volljährig wird	on his next birthday, when he comes of age
Ach, wo sind die Zeiten, **da** Pinneberg sich für einen guten Verkäufer hielt? (*Fallada*)	*Alas, where are the days when Pinneberg considered himself a good salesman?*

(iii) The use of *wo* as a relative indicating time is common, especially in speech, and it is frequently found in writing. However, many Germans do not consider it to be standard and

prefer other alternatives in formal registers:

im Augenblick, **wo** er die Tür aufmachte	*at the moment when he opened the door*
jetzt, **wo** ich das weiß	now that I know that
Wir leben in einer Zeit, **wo** Verkaufen arm macht (*Remarque*)	*We live in a time when selling makes one poor*

(c) *wie* is used to indicate manner, especially following *die Art*

die Art, **wie** er zu mir sprach	*the manner in which he spoke to me*
so, **wie** ich es gewohnt bin	*just as I am used to*

(d) *warum* is used to indicate cause, chiefly after *der Grund*

weshalb is an alternative in formal registers:

der Grund, **warum** (weshalb) ich nach Aachen ging	*the reason why I went to Aachen*

5.5 Indefinites, quantifiers and other determiners and pronouns

This section deals with the meaning and use of the remaining determiners and pronouns, in alphabetical order, as listed in **Table 5.10** with their most frequent English equivalents.

Table 5.10 Indefinites, quantifiers and other determiners and pronouns

aller, all	*all (the)*	**irgend(-)**	*some-*	**mehrere**	*several*
ander	*(the) other*	**jeder**	*each, every*	**meinesgleichen**	*people like me*
beide(s)	*both*	**jedermann**	*everyone*	**nichts**	*nothing*
einer	*one*	**jedweder**	*each, every*	**sämtlich(e)**	*all (the)*
ein bisschen	*a little*	**jeglicher**	*each, every*	**unsereiner**	*the likes of us*
ein paar	*a few*	**jemand, niemand**	*someone, no-one*	**viel, viele**	*much, many*
ein wenig	*a little*	**kein(er)**	*no, none*	**wenig, wenige**	*a little, a few*
einige(r)	*some*	**lauter**	*nothing but*	**welcher**	*some*
etliche	*some*	**man**	*one*	**wer**	*someone*
etwas	*something*	**manch(er)**	*some*		
folgende(r)	*the following*				

The declension of adjectives after these determiners is explained in **6.1.4**.

5.5.1 *aller, alle* 'all (the)'

(a) *all-* 'all (the)', used as a determiner, has a number of alternative forms

(i) **Inflected *aller***, with the **endings of *dieser*** (see Table 5.2), used on its own. A following adjective has 'weak' endings:

Alle Kinder spielen gern	*All children like playing*
Alle Schüler waren gekommen	All the pupils had come
mit **allen** denkbaren Mitteln	with all conceivable means
alles Glück dieser Erde	*all the happiness of this world*

This is the commonest alternative in the plural, especially in the nominative and accusative, but in the singular it is largely restricted to formal registers and set phrases. Plural *alle* may correspond to English 'all the' or 'all (of) the', e.g. *alle Schüler* 'all the pupils'/'all of the pupils'. *alle* is **never** followed by a genitive.

In the genitive singular masculine and neuter, ***all*** - has the ending - ***en*** rather than - ***es*** **if** the noun has the ending *-(e)s*, e.g. *die Grenzen* **allen** (less frequent: ***alles***) *Wissens*; *solch verfehlte Ablehnung* **allen** *Verhandelns* (*Zeit*).

(ii) **Inflected *aller*** followed by the **definite article**:

alle die Bücher	*all the books*
alle die Mühe	*all the trouble*

This is quite common in the plural, especially in colloquial speech, and with feminine nouns in the nominative and accusative singular.

(iii) **Uninflected *all*** followed by the **definite article**:

all das schlechte Wetter	*all the bad weather*
all die Schüler	all the pupils
mit **all dem** Geld	*with all the money*

This is the most frequent alternative in the singular, and it is quite often used in the plural. Attempts to establish a consistent difference of meaning between inflected and uninflected forms are unconvincing.

The most idiomatic equivalent of English *all* with a singular noun is often a phrase with *ganz*, see **(g)** below.

(b) *all* - is often used in conjunction with another determiner

In the plural both inflected and uninflected forms are found, but in the singular only uninflected *all* is used:

all mein Geld

von **all diesem** Brot

all/alle meine Brüder

nach **all ihrer** Mühe

mit **all/allen diesen** Schwierigkeiten

Only the inflected form is used before *solch*, which then has the endings of an adjective, e.g. *alle solchen Frauen*.

(c) *all* - used as a pronoun declines like *dieser*

(see Table 5.2), but it is not used in the genitive singular. The neuter singular *alles* is used for 'everything', the plural *alle* for 'everyone':

Alles ist bereit	*Everything is ready*
Ich bin mit **allem** einverstanden	I agree to everything
Alle waren anwesend	Everybody was present
Sind das **alle** ?	*Is that all (of them)?*

(d) Plural *alle* 'all' is often used with a personal pronoun

Sie hat uns **alle** beleidigt	*She insulted us all*
Ich habe mit ihnen **allen** gesprochen	I have spoken to all of them
Das ist unser **aller** Hoffnung	*That is the hope of all of us*

alle usually follows the pronoun, but in the nominative it can be separated from it. In this case it has slightly less emphasis. Compare:

Sie **alle** sind gekommen Sie sind **alle** gekommen	}	*They have all come*

(e) Uninflected *all* and inflected *alles* are often used with the demonstratives *das* and *dieses*

This corresponds to English 'all that' or 'all this'. Uninflected *all* always precedes the demonstrative, but inflected *alles* may precede or follow the demonstrative, or, with less emphasis, be separated from it:

Ich habe **all das/alles** **das/das alles** schon gesehen **Das** habe ich **alles**	}	*I've already seen all that*

schon gesehen	
Ich bin mit **all dem/**	*I agree to all that*
dem allen/allem dem	*I can't cope with all this*
einverstanden	
Mit **all diesem** werde	
ich nicht fertig	

In the dative singular, when *all-* follows the demonstrative, it can have the ending - *en* as an alternative to - *em*, e.g. *dem/diesem all* ***en*** or *dem all* ***em***.

(f) A noun can be qualified by a following inflected *all* -

all- follows the verb if the noun comes before the verb. This usage is most common in the plural:

Die Kinder spielen **alle** im Garten

Die Semmeln sind **alle** trocken

In the singular this construction is colloquial and restricted to the nominative and accusative singular feminine and neuter:

Das Brot ist **alles** trocken

Ich habe **die Milch alle** verschüttet

Singular *alles* is often used with a plural noun after the verb *sein* in the sense 'nothing but': *Das sind* ***alles*** *Lügen.*

(g) The use of *ganz* for English 'all'

In practice, the adjective *ganz* is often the most idiomatic equivalent of English 'all', particularly with singular nouns. Thus, English 'all my money' may correspond in German to *mein ganzes Geld* or *all mein Gel d*, with the former being rather more frequent. Compare also:

Der **ganze** Wein war schlecht	*All the wine was bad*
diese **ganze** Unsicherheit	all this uncertainty
mit seiner **ganzen** jugendlichen Energie	*with all his youthful energy*

With collective nouns, time expressions and geographical names *ganz* is often the only possible equivalent for English 'all':

Die **ganze** Familie kommt	*all (of) the family is/are coming*
den **ganzen** Tag (lang)	all day (long)
der **ganze** Januar war kalt	all January it was cold
ganz Europa, **ganz** Schweden, **ganz** München	all (of) Europe, all (of) Sweden, all (of) Munich
in der **ganzen** Schweiz	*in all of Switzerland*

The use of *ganz* with a plural noun is colloquial, e.g. *Nach dem Sturm waren die ganzen Fenster kaputt.* In such contexts *sämtliche* (see **5.5.23**) is a common alternative in formal registers, e.g. *Nach dem Sturm waren* **sämtliche** Fenster ('all the windows') *kaputt.*

(h) Other uses of *all* -

(i) *alles* can be used to emphasize a large number of people or things with the interrogatives *wer* and *was*, cf. **5.3.3b**, e.g. *Wer kommt denn* **alles**? *Was hast du dort* **alles** *gekauft?*
(ii) In colloquial North German *alle* is used in the sense of 'all gone': *Die Butter ist jetzt* **alle**. *Meine Geduld ist* **alle**.
(iii) *alle* is compounded with the demonstrative pronoun in the phrases *bei* **alledem** 'for all that', *trotz* **alledem** 'in spite of all that'.
(iv) *alles* occurs frequently with an adjective used as a noun, see **6.2.4b**, e.g. *alles Wichtige* 'all (the) important things'.
(v) In colloquial speech in the South and West, *all(e)s* (sometimes spelled *als*) is used to express a continuous action (= English 'to keep on doing sth.'), e.g. *Er hat* **als** *geflucht* 'He kept on cursing'.

5.5.2 *ander* 'other'

(a) In most contexts *ander* is an adjective

However, it has a few special forms and uses which resemble those of a determiner or pronoun. The following examples illustrate the range of its uses:

der **and(e)re** Student	*the other student*
mein **anderes** Auto	my other car
der **and(e)re**	the other one
irgendein **and(e)rer**	some/any other one
die drei **anderen**	the three others
alle **anderen**	all the others
andere deutsche Politiker	other German politicians
alles **and(e)re**	*everything else*

When *ander* is used without a preceding article or other determiner, a following adjective has the same ('strong') endings as those of *ander*, **except that** - ***en*** is the norm in the **dative singular masculine** and **neuter**:

anderes dumm **es** Gerede

andere italienisch **e** Maler

mit anderer modern **er** Musik

aus anderem wertvoll **en** Material

(b) Notes on the spelling and forms of *ander*

(i) The first - *e*- is often dropped in writing, e.g. *andre*, *andrer*, *andres*. With the endings - *en* and - *em*, though, it is more usual to drop the second - *e* -, e.g. *ander(e)m*, *ander(e)n* (less common: *andrem*, *andren*).

(ii) When used with a preceding determiner and no following noun, it differs from other adjectives in not normally being spelled with a capital letter: *der and(e)re, alles and(e)re*, etc. However, an initial small or capital letter can be used after *etwas* and *nichts*: *etwas and(e)res/ And(e)res, nichts and(e)res/ And(e)res*, see also **21.2.1c**.
(iii) **'another cup of tea' = *noch eine Tasse Tee***
(iv) **For the adverb *anders* 'else', see 7.4.5.**

5.5.3 *beide* 'both'

(a) *beide* 'both' can be used as a determiner or a pronoun

It has the same endings as the plural of *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**), and a following adjective has **weak** endings:

Ich habe **beide** Bücher gekauft	*I bought both books*
Beide Brüder sind gekommen	Both brothers came
beide jungen Mädchen	both young girls
Seine Brüder sind **beide** gekommen	His brothers both came
Beide sind gekommen	*Both came*

When used as a pronoun, *beide* can be strengthened by *alle*:

Alle beide sind gekommen	*The two of them came*

(b) *beide* can be used as a simple adjective after a definite article or another determiner

It then has the endings of a 'weak' adjective and often corresponds to English 'two':

Seine **beiden** Brüder sind	*His two brothers came*

gekommen Die **beiden** Brüder sind gekommen	*The two brothers came*

(c) Used with a personal pronoun, *beide* usually has the endings of plural *dieser*

wir **beide**, sie **beide**, von euch **beiden**, unser **beider**

There is some variation in usage with *wir* and *ihr*:

(i) In isolation *wir beiden* can be used rather than *wir beide*. It is generally less common, but it is usual if a noun follows, e.g. *wir beiden Freunde.*
(ii) *ihr beiden* is more usual than *ihr beide* in isolation, e.g. *Ihr **beiden**, wollt ihr mitkommen?* Within a clause either is current, e.g. *Wollt ihr **beide(n)** schon mitkommen?*
(iii) If *beide* is separated from the pronoun, only the ending - *e* is usual:

Wir wollen **beide** schon mitkommen. **Beide** halten sie ein Wahlergebnis für möglich, das eine große Koalition erzwänge (*Zeit*)	Ihr wollt **beide** mitkommen, oder? *They* **both** *consider an election result possible which would force a grand coalition*

(d) The neuter singular *beides* is used collectively to refer to two things

In this usage it can be the equivalent of English 'either':

Sie hatte einen Hut und einen Regenschirm mit und ließ **beides** im Zug liegen Sprechen Sie Deutsch oder Englisch? – **Beides**	*She had a hat and an umbrella with her and left both on the train* Do you speak German or English? Both *Either is possible*

Beides ist möglich

If *beides* is the subject of *sein*, the verb can be singular or plural:

Das Hotel und die Landschaft: **beides ist/sind** schön	*The hotel and the scenery: both are lovely*

The use of singular *beides* to refer to people is a non-standard colloquialism, e.g. *Ich habe mit den Brüdern Schmid zu Mittag gegessen.* ***Beides*** *ist/sind* (in writing: *Beide sind*) *Vegetarier.*

(e) Other uses of *beide*, and other equivalents of English 'both'

Einer von beiden könnte uns helfen	*One/Either of the two could help us*
An beiden Enden des Ganges hängt ein Bild	At either end of the corridor there is a picture
in beiden Fällen	in either case
Keiner von beiden ist gekommen	Neither of them came
Sowohl seine Frau **als (auch)** seine Tochter sind krank	*Both his wife and his daughter are sick*

5.5.4 *einer* 'one'

(a) The pronoun *einer* declines like the possessive pronoun *meiner*

The forms are given in **Table 5.11**. Note in particular that the pronoun *einer* has different endings from those of the indefinite article *ein* in the nominative singular masculine (*ein* ***er***) and the nominative/accusative singular neuter (*ein* ***es***).

Table 5.11 Declension of the pronoun *einer*

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Nominative	einer	eine	eines
Accusative	einen	eine	eines
Genitive	eines	einer	eines
Dative	einem	einer	einem

A paraphrase with *von* (see **2.4.2**) is often preferred to the genitive forms of *einer* so that, for example, *die Empfehlung* **von einem** ihrer Freunde is used rather than: *die Empfehlung* ***eines*** *ihrer Freunde* 'the recommendation of one of her friends'.

eines is often written *eins*, reflecting its usual pronunciation. For the use of *eins* as a numeral 'one', see **8.1.2**.

(b) The use of the pronoun *einer*

eine *r* corresponds to English 'one' in the sense of 'one of a certain number':

einer der Männer, **eine** der Frauen, **ein(e)s** der Kinder	*one of the men, one of the women, one of the children*
Ein Fenster war offen und **ein(e)s** war zu	One window was open and one was shut
Ich sprach mit **einer** der Damen	I spoke to one of the ladies
eines der Themen, die der slowenische Außenminister angesprochen hat (*Presse*)	*one of the topics which the Slovenian foreign minister touched on*

Unstressed *einer* has the negative *keiner*, see **5.5.16**, stressed *einer* has the negative *nicht einer*. Compare: *Ich habe* ***keinen*** *gesehen 'I haven't seen one' and: Ich habe* ***nicht einen*** *gesehen* 'I haven't seen a single one'.

(c) *einer* often has the sense of 'someone', 'anyone'

Einer muss es gesehen haben	*Someone must have seen it*

einer, der sie gekannt hat	a person/someone who knew her
Mit so **einem** will ich nichts zu tun haben	I don't want anything to do with anyone like that
Da kam **einer** durch die Glastür	*Someone came through the glass door*

This is common in spoken German. It is often equivalent to *jemand*, see **5.5.15**, although this more clearly refers to an indefinite 'somebody' whose identity is quite unknown. *jemand* is also generally more polite, whereas *einer* can sound offensive, particularly in the feminine, e.g. *Da war gerade **eine** mit sechs Kindern.*

The case forms of *einer* are used for those which *man* lacks (i.e. the accusative and dative, see **5.5.18**), but using *einer* for *man* in the nominative (e.g. *Und das soll **einer** wissen!* for: *Und das soll man wissen!*) is colloquial.

(d) *einer* can be used as an adjective

with the definite article, the demonstratives or the possessives. It then has the 'weak' adjective endings (see **Table 6.4**), but it never has an initial capital letter, even when there is no noun following:

Der **eine** deutsche Tourist beschwerte sich	*One German tourist complained*
das **eine**, das ich brauche	the one thing I need
Mein **einer** Sohn ist gestorben (*coll.*)	One of my sons has died
Dieser **eine** Schnaps wird dich nicht gleich umwerfen	*This one schnapps won't knock you out*

der eine linked to a following *der andere* corresponds to English '(the) one.. . the other', etc. In German, though, the definite article is usually present, whereas it can be lacking in English, and the plural *die einen* can occur in the meaning 'some':

Das eine Buch habe ich gelesen,	*I've read one of the books, but not*

das andere aber noch nicht	*the other one yet*
Die einen sangen, **die anderen** spielten	*Some were singing, others were playing*

(e) Some idiomatic uses of *einer*

Das ist aber **einer** !	*He's quite a lad*
Du bist mir **einer** ! (see **2.5.2d**)	You're a nice one!
Eins wollte ich noch sagen	There's one more thing I wanted to say
Trinken wir noch **eins** ?	Shall we have another (drink)?
Es ist mir alles **eins**	It's all the same to me
Er redet **in einem** fort	*He talks without stopping*

5.5.5 *ein wenig, ein bisschen* 'a little'

(a) *ein wenig* corresponds to English 'a little'

The ***ein* does not decline**. A phrase with *von* (see **2.4**) is used rather than a genitive:

Ich hatte noch **ein wenig** britisches Geld	*I still had a little British money*
Der Zug hatte sich **ein wenig** verspätet	The train had got a little late
Der Saal war **ein wenig** ruhiger geworden	The room had become a little more quiet
mit **ein wenig** männlicher Eitelkeit	*with a little male vanity*

(b) *ein bisschen* can replace *ein wenig* in most contexts

It could be used in all the examples in **(a)** without any significant difference in meaning, but it is usually felt to sound more colloquial.

Unlike *ein wenig*, it can, optionally, be declined in the dative singular, e.g. *mit* **ein(em)** bisschen Geld. This is normal when it is used as a pronoun, e.g. *Mit* ***einem*** *bisschen wäre ich schon zufriede n.* It also differs from *ein wenig* in that it can occur with a preceding adjective:

ein winziges **bisschen** Käse	*a tiny little bit of cheese*
mit einem ganz kleinen **bisschen** gesunden Verstand	*with a very little bit of common sense*

In South Germany *ein bisse(r)l* is a frequent variant in speech for northern *ein bisschen.*

(c) *bisschen* can also be used with a demonstrative, a possessive or *kein*

mit **dem bisschen** Verstand, den er hat	*with the little sense that he has*
mit **ihrem bisschen** Talent	with her bit of talent
Er hat **kein bisschen** Humor	*He hasn't got the least sense of humour*

5.5.6 *ein paar* 'a few'

The *ein* of *ein paar* does not decline. A phrase with *von* (see **2.4**) is used rather than a following genitive. The phrase *ein paar* is close in meaning to *einige*, see **5.5.7**, but it sounds more colloquial:

Ein paar Flaschen Wein haben wir noch im Keller	*We've still got a few bottles of wine in the cellar*
Willst du **ein paar** haben?	Do you want a few?
mit der Hilfe von **ein paar** alten Freunden	*with the help of a few old friends*

The *ein* can be replaced by another determiner, which is declined. Such combinations can sound disparaging or pejorative:

Was soll ich mit den **paar** Euros	*What am I supposed to do with*

anfangen?	*these few lousy euros?*
der Wert meiner **paar** Möbel	the value of my few bits of furniture
Die Straßenbahn kommt alle **paar** Minuten	*The tram comes every few minutes*

ein paar should not be confused with *ein Paar* 'a pair'. Compare *ein paar Schuhe* 'a few shoes' but *ein Paar Schuhe* 'a pair of shoes'.

5.5.7 *einiger, einige* 'some'

einig - refers to a limited amount or number. It corresponds to English unstressed 'some' (or 'a few', as it is close in meaning to *ein paar*, see **5.5.6**). It declines like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**) except that the genitive singular masculine and neuter form (which is little used) is *einig* ***en***, and a following adjective in the plural usually has **strong** endings, see **6.1.4**.

(a) The use of *einiger* in the singular is limited

The usual German equivalents of English unstressed *some* in the singular are *etwas* (see **5.5.9**), or, most commonly, simply no article or determiner at all (see **4.8.3**), e.g. *Ich habe heute (etwas) Fleisch gekauft* 'I bought some meat today'.

When *einiger* is used in the singular it implies a rather unusual or unexpected quantity and often comes close to English 'no little'. It is most frequent with mass and abstract nouns (especially *Entfernung* and *Zeit*), adjectives used as nouns and collectives:

mit **einigem** Glück	*with some degree of luck*
bei **einigem** guten Willen	with a certain degree of good will
vor ihm in **einiger** Entfernung	some distance in front of him
vor **einiger** Zeit schon	some time ago now
nach **einigem** Überlegen	after some consideration
Diese Schlangen, die ihr Gift spucken, zielen bis drei Meter weit	*These snakes which spit their venom can aim up to three metres*

noch mit **einiger** Treffsicherheit (*Grzimek*)	*with no little accuracy*

In the singular *einiger* is mainly used as a determiner rather than as a pronoun, but the neuter singular *einiges* does occur as a collective indefinite pronoun:

einiges davon	*some of it*
Ich habe noch **einiges** zu tun	*I've still got a few things to do*

(b) In the plural *einige* is widely used both as a determiner and as a pronoun

Sie wollte **einige** Ansichtskarten von Rothenburg kaufen	*She wanted to buy some postcards of Rothenburg*
In der Stadt gibt es **einige** Friseure	There are a few hairdressers in the town
unter Verwendung **einiger** technischer Mittel	by using some technical methods
Einige mussten stehen	Some/A few had to stand
Sie hat schon **einige** mitgebracht	*She's already brought some/a few*

German often uses no determiner in contexts where English uses unstressed 'some' to refer to a number of things. Thus, a common alternative to the first example above would be: *Sie wollte Ansichtskarten von Rothenburg kaufen.*

einige is also often used with numerals to mean 'a few', e.g. ***einige*** *tausend Bücher* 'a few thousand books'.

5.5.8 *etliche* 'some'

etliche is similar in meaning to *einige*. However, it typically implies 'more than the expected number' and it is quite widely used in this sense in both spoken and written German. In this way, it approaches English 'several' or 'a fair number of'. It declines like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**) and it is almost only used in the plural, as a determiner (much less

commonly as a pronoun). A following adjective usually has **strong** endings, see **6.1.4**.

Warum ist die Bahn so unpünktlich geworden? Da gibt es **etliche** Ursachen (*Spiegel*)	*Why have the railways become so unpunctual? There are several/a (good) number of reasons for this*
Etliche dieser Stücke sind auch für Anfänger relativ leicht zu bewältigen (*SWF*)	*Some/A number of these pieces are relatively easy to manage, even for a beginner*

In Switzerland *etwelche* is used with the same meaning as *etliche*, e.g. *Den FC Flawil plagen vor dem morgigen Spiel zwar etwelche Personalsorgen* (*SGT*).

5.5.9 *etwas* 'something', 'anything'

etwas is used as an **indefinite pronoun**, to **qualify nouns**, and as an **adverb**. It has no case forms and is not used in genitive constructions, a phrase with *von* (see **2.4**) being used if necessary.

(a) As an indefinite pronoun, *etwas* corresponds to English 'something' or 'anything'

Etwas störte mich	*Something bothered me*
Ich habe **etwas** für Sie	I've got something for you
Hast du **etwas** gesagt?	*Did you say anything?*

In this use, *etwas* is commonly reduced to *was* in colloquial speech unless it occupies first position in the sentence, e.g. *Ich habe **was** für Si e*; *Hast du **was** gesagt? etwas* is often used with *von* in a partitive sense, i.e. 'some (of)':

Ich möchte **etwas** von diesem Kuchen	*I would like some of this cake*

In contexts like this, *etwas* can be omitted: *Ich möchte von diesem*

Kuchen.

(b) Qualifying a noun, *etwas* has the sense of 'some', 'any' or 'a little'

It is used chiefly with mass and abstract nouns in the singular. However, as an equivalent to unstressed English 'some' or 'any', German often uses no determiner at all (see **4.2.2a**, **4.8.3** and **5.5.7b**), and *etwas* could be omitted in all the examples below:

Ich brauche **etwas** frisches Fleisch	*I need some fresh meat*
Er hat kaum **etwas** Geld	He has hardly any money
Bringen Sie mir bitte **etwas** Brot	Please bring me some bread
Sie muss **etwas** Geduld haben	She needs a little patience
Etwas mehr Aufmerksamkeit wäre nützlich gewesen	*A little more attention would have been useful*

etwas is commonly used with a following adjective used as a noun (see **6.2.4b**). The adjective has the 'strong' adjective endings:

etwas ganz Neu **es**	*something quite new*
Er hat von **etwas** ganz Neu **em** gesprochen	*He spoke of something quite new*

(c) As an adverb, *etwas* means 'somewhat', 'a bit'

Er ist **etwas** nervös	*He is somewhat/rather/a bit nervous*
Es geht ihm **etwas** besser	He is somewhat/a bit better
Er zögerte **etwas**	*He hesitated somewhat/a bit*

5.5.10 *folgend* '(the) following'

folgend can be used as a simple adjective, but it has some special forms

and uses which resemble those of a determiner or pronoun. Unlike English 'following', it is often used without a preceding article or other determiner. In these contexts a following adjective usually has 'weak' endings in the singular and 'strong' endings in the plural, see **6.1.4**:

alle **folgenden** Bemerkungen	*all the following remarks*
Sie machte **folgende** Bemerkungen	She made the following remarks
Sie machte **folgende** treffende Bemerkungen	She made the following apposite remarks
folgender interessante Gedanke	the following interesting thought
mit **folgender** nachdrücklichen Warnung	with the following firm warning
Sie sagte mir **Folgendes**: …	She said the following to me: …
Im **Folgenden** wird diese Frage näher erläutert	In the following this question will be clarified more precisely
Aus **Folgendem** lässt sich schließen, dass…	*From the following it may be deduced that …*

When *folgend* is used as a pronoun meaning 'the following', as in the last three examples, it has an initial capital letter.

5.5.11 *irgend* 'some … or other'

(a) The principal use of *irgend* is to emphasize indefiniteness

It occurs in combination with many indefinite pronouns, adverbs and determiners, giving them the sense of 'some … or other' or 'any … at all'. All these compounds of *irgend* are now written as single words, e.g. *irgendetwas*, *irgendjemand*, *irgendwo*.

(b) *irgend* can be compounded with most interrogative adverbs to form indefinite adverbs

(see **7.6** for the basic forms of these interrogative adverbs):

irgendwann 'sometime or other', 'any time'; *irgendwie* 'somehow', 'anyhow'; *irgendwo* 'somewhere', 'anywhere'; *irgendwohin* '(to) somewhere, anywhere'; *irgendwoher* 'from somewhere, anywhere':

Du musst es **irgendwie** machen	*You'll have to do it somehow*
Er fährt heute Nachmittag **irgendwohin**	He's going somewhere this afternoon
Gehst du heute Abend **irgendwohin** ?	*Are you going anywhere tonight?*

(c) With *einer*, (*et*) *was*, *jemand* and *wer*, *irgend* stresses indefiniteness

irgendeiner, *irgendjemand* and *irgendwer* correspond to English 'somebody', 'anybody', *irgendetwas* to 'something', 'anything'. In practice, *irgendeiner* and *irgendwer* are commoner than simple *einer* and *wer* (see **5.5.4** and **5.5.27**) to mean 'somebody', 'anybody':

Irgendwann wurden von **irgendwem** diese Briefe aus dem Kasten genommen (*Böll*)	*At some time or other someone (or other) took these letters out of the letter-box*
Versteht er **irgendetwas** von Wein?	Does he know anything (at all) about wine?
Irgendeiner soll es gesagt haben	Someone (or other) is supposed to have said it
Hat denn **irgendjemand** angerufen?	*Did anybody phone?*

Note that only *irgendjemand* and *irgendetwas*, not simple *jemand* or *etwas*, are possible in response to a question:

Wer hat eben geklopft?	*Who just knocked? Someone or other*
Irgendjemand	
Was willst du denn kaufen?	*What are you going to buy, then? Something or other*
Irgendetwas	

In colloquial North German, *irgend* can be compounded with the prepositional adverb with *wo* (*r*)- (see **5.3.3c**), in place of *irgendetwas* with a preposition:

Ich habe mich **irgendworan** gestoßen (*standard*: an irgendetwas)	*I knocked against something or other*

(d) irgendein(er) and irgendwelcher

These correspond to 'some (or other), any (whatsoever)', often with the sense of 'no matter which/who'. They are used as determiners or pronouns.

(i) The determiner *irgendein* has the endings of the indefinite article *ein*, see **Table 4.3**. It is used in the singular with countable nouns:

Er zeigte mir **irgendeine** Broschüre	*He showed me some brochure or other*
Hat er **irgendeine** Bemerkung gemacht?	Did he make any remark (at all)?
Die Selbstmordquote soll höher sein als in **irgendeinem** anderen Ort der Welt (*Bednarz*)	*The suicide rate is supposed to be higher than in any other place in the world*

(ii) The pronoun *irgendeiner*, which declines like *einer* (see **Table 5.11**) only has singular forms and can only refer to countable nouns. The masculine and feminine forms are used in the sense of 'somebody', 'anybody':

Irgendeiner muss dich gesehen haben	*Someone or other must have seen you*
Wenn du wirklich einen neuen Tisch suchst, musst du hier im Geschäft **irgendeinen** gesehen haben, der dir gefällt	If you're really looking for a new table, you must have seen one here in the shop which you like

Ich habe ein paar Bücher über Israel. Sie können sich **irgendeins** ausleihen	*I've got a few books about Israel. You can borrow any one you like*

(iii) *irgendwelcher*, which declines like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**), is used as a determiner in the singular with mass and abstract nouns, and in the plural. A following adjective in the plural most often has weak endings, see **6.1.4**. The genitive is rarely used in the singular:

Wenn **irgendwelche** anderen Idioten auf RTL heiraten wollen, … (*HMP*)	*If any other idiots want to get married on RTL …*
Er hat **irgendwelches** dumme(s) Zeug geredet	He was talking some stupid rubbish or other
Wenn Sie **irgendwelche** Probleme haben, wenden Sie sich an uns (*Bednarz*)	*If you have any problems (at all), turn to us*

Colloquially, *irgendwelcher* is often used for *irgendein*, e.g. *Er zeigte mir* ***irgendwelche*** *Broschüre.*

(e) *irgend so ein* corresponds to English 'one/some of those', 'any/some such'

In the plural, *irgend solche* is used. It can often sound pejorative:

Wer war es? Es war **irgend so ein** Vertreter für Doppelfenster	*Who was it? It was one of those men who sell double glazing*
Er machte **irgend solche** komische Bemerkungen	*He made some such odd remarks*

(f) *irgend* can be used as an independent adverb with the sense of *irgendwie*

i.e. ‘somehow’, ‘anyhow’, ‘in some way’:

wenn **irgend** möglich	*if at all possible*
Ich würde mich freuen, wenn es **irgend** geht	*I would be pleased if it’s possible somehow*

5.5.12 *jeder* ‘each’, ‘every’

(a) *jeder* is only used in the singular, as a determiner or a pronoun

When used as a determiner, *jeder* corresponds to English ‘each’, ‘every’, when used as a pronoun to English ‘everyone’, ‘everybody’. It declines like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**), except that *jeden* (rather than *jedes*) is usual in the genitive singular masculine and neuter if the following noun has the ending *-(e)s*, e.g. *am Ende jed* ***en*** (less frequent: *jed* ***es****) Abschnitts*. It is not used in the genitive as a pronoun.

Sie hat **jedem** Kind einen Apfel gegeben	*She gave each child an apple*
nach **jedem** solchen Versuch	after each such attempt
Er kam **jeden** Tag zur selben Zeit	He came every day at the same time
In diesem kleinen Ort kennt **jeder jeden**	*In this little place everyone knows everybody else*

jeder often has an individualizing sense (i.e. ‘no matter which/who’), in which case it can be the equivalent of English ‘any’:

Das weiß doch **jeder** gebildete Bürger	*Any/Every educated citizen knows that, though*
Die industrielle Revolution verwandelte die Lebensbedingungen der Menschen radikaler als **jeder** andere Ereigniszusammenhang der neueren Geschichte	*The Industrial Revolution changed people’s living conditions more radically than any other set of events in recent history*

The neuter *jedes* can refer back to both sexes: *Seine Eltern waren sehr tüchtig,* ***jedes*** *auf seine Weise.* See also section **1.1.12b**.

(b) The combination *ein jeder* is more emphatic than *jeder*

It is used chiefly as a pronoun and is particularly frequent in the individualizing sense of stressed 'any', i.e. 'no matter which/who'. In this combination, *jeder* has the same endings as a simple adjective:

Ein jeder wollte was sagen	*Everyone wanted to say something*
Das könnte doch **ein jeder** machen	But everybody/anybody (at all) could do that
Das kannst du doch nicht **einem jeden** erzählen	But you can't tell that to just anybody
Die Wünsche **eines jeden** werden berücksichtigt	*The wishes of every individual are taken into account*

5.5.13 *jedermann* 'everybody', 'everyone'

jedermann is only used, as a pronoun, in elevated, formal registers and set phrases. Its meaning is the same as that of *jeder*, which is much more commonly used. Its only case form is the genitive *jedermanns*.

Jedermann wusste, dass Michael den Wehrdienst verweigert hatte	*Everyone knew that Michael had refused to do military service*
Das ist nicht **jedermanns** Sache	*That's not everyone's cup of tea*

5.5.14 *jedweder, jeglicher* 'each', 'every'

jedweder and *jeglicher* decline like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**). They are used as determiners or pronouns as alternatives to *jeder* and both are largely restricted to formal written registers.

(a) *jedweder* is rather more emphatic than *jeder*

It has a rather old-fashioned ring and is used sparingly, even in formal registers:

Auch sonst bleiben den Insassen **jedwede** Motorgeräusche verborgen (*HMP*)	*Otherwise, too, the occupants are cut off from any sort of noise from the motor*

(b) *jeglicher* stresses the individuality of the items in question

It is most often used in the sense of stressed 'any' (i.e. 'no matter who/what'). It is most frequent nowadays with abstract nouns and in negative contexts. Unlike *jeder*, it can also be used in the plural. Adjectives following *jeglicher* have the strong declension, see **6.1.4**:

Das entbehrt **jeglicher** Grundlage	*That is completely unfounded*
Gorbatschow lehnte **jegliche** Änderung der Grenzziehungen in der Sowjetunion ab (*FR*)	Gorbachov turned down any alteration of the frontiers in the Soviet Union
Es fehlt derzeit **jeglicher** Ansatz für eine Besserung am Arbeitsmarkt (*MM*)	*At the moment we are lacking any sign of an improvement in the labour market*

5.5.15 *jemand* 'somebody', 'someone'; niemand 'nobody', 'no-one'

(a) Declension and use of *jemand* and *niemand*

(i) *jemand* 'somebody', 'someone' and *niemand* 'nobody', 'no-one' have endings to show case as given in **Table 5.12** .

Table 5.12 Declension of *jemand* and *niemand*

Nominative	jemand	niemand
Accusative	jemand(en)	niemand(en)
Genitive	jemandes	niemandes
Dative	jemand(em)	niemand(em)

In the accusative and dative, the forms without endings are at least as common as the forms with endings in both speech and writing:

Ich habe **niemand** / **niemanden** gesehen

Ich habe **jemand** / **jemandem** das Paket gegeben

(ii) The genitive forms are felt to be awkward and tend to be avoided by paraphrasing, e.g. *Hat jemand diese Aktentasche liegen lassen?* or *Wem gehört diese Aktentasche?* rather than: *Ist das jemands Aktentasche?*
(iii) Pronouns and determiners referring back to *jemand* and *niemand* have the masculine singular form: *Niemand,* ***der*** *es weiß; Jemand hat* ***seine*** *Tasche vergessen*
(iv) In colloquial speech, *einer* and *wer* are common alternatives to *jemand*, see **5.5.4** and **5.5.27**, as is *keiner* for *niemand*, see **5.5.16**.
(v) The indefiniteness of *jemand* may be emphasized by combining it with *irgend*, see **5.5.11c**.

(b) *jemand* and *niemand* with a following adjective

When followed by an adjective, *jemand* and *niemand* are usually endingless in the accusative and dative. The adjective is treated as a noun (see **6.2**), and it can have the ending - *es* in all cases, although it is now more usual for it to have the endings - *en* in the accusative and - *em* in the dative cases.

Jemand Fremd **es** ist gekommen

Ich habe jemand Fremd **en** gesehen (less often: *jemand Fremd* ***es***)

Ich habe mit jemand Fremd **em** gesprochen (less often: *jemand Fremd **es***)

The use of the ending - *er* in the nominative case, e.g. *jemand Fremd **er***, is a South German regionalism.

jemand and *niemand* can be used in a similar way with *ander*, which always has a small initial letter in all these forms:

Jemand ander **s** ist gekommen

Ich habe jemand ander **s** /ander **en** gesehen

Ich habe mit jemand ander **s** /ander **em** gesprochen

With *anders* the ending - *s* in all cases is the more frequent alternative, and the endings - *en* and -*em* are typical of South German usage.

5.5.16 *kein, keiner* 'no', 'not ... any', 'none'

(a) *kein* is the negative form of the indefinite article

See **4.1.2c**. Its basic declension is identical to *ein*, but it does have plural forms, as illustrated in **Table 4.4**. It is used typically where a corresponding positive sentence would have an indefinite article or no article, and it thus usually corresponds to English 'not a', 'not ... any 'or 'no':

Sie hat ein Auto	Sie hat **kein** Auto
Wir haben frische Brötchen	Wir haben **keine** frischen Brötchen
Ich habe Zeit	Ich habe **keine** Zeit

(b) *kein* or *nicht* in negation?

It sometimes seems difficult to know whether to use *kein* or *nicht* in negation. In general, *kein* is used to negate an indefinite noun (i.e. one

with an indefinite article or no article), as in the examples given under **(a)** above. *nicht* is used in other cases, notably to negate a whole sentence, e.g. *Sie will heute mitkommen – Sie will heute* ***nicht*** *mitkommen*. However, there are contexts where the choice is not completely obvious:

(i) German phrases with an indefinite noun (and thus negated with *kein*) which have rather different English equivalents:

Ich bin Deutscher	Ich bin **kein** Deutscher
Ich spreche Deutsch	Ich spreche **kein** Deutsch
ein Problem von großer Bedeutung	ein Problem von **keiner** großen Bedeutung

(ii) Phrasal verbs with nouns, e.g. *Atem holen*, *sich Mühe geben*, *Freude empfinden* and all those with *haben*, e.g. *Angst*, *Durst*, *Hunger haben*, etc. are generally negated with *kein*:

Er hat sich **keine** Mühe gegeben

Dabei hat er **keine** Freude empfunden

Ich habe **keinen** Durst, Hunger

Sie hatten **keine** Angst

Phrasal verbs with *nehmen* have *kein* **or** *nicht*:

Er hat **keine** / **nicht** Rücksicht auf mich genommen

Sie wollen **keine** / **nicht** Rache nehmen

Sie hat **keinen** / **nicht** Abschied von ihm genommen

nicht occurs with phrasal verbs where the noun is so closely linked to the verb that it is felt to be the equivalent of a separable prefix:

Er spielt **nicht** Klavier

Sie läuft **nicht** Schi

Sie haben in Berlin **nicht** Wurzel gefasst

Er hat **nicht** Wort gehalten

Er kann **nicht** Auto fahren

(c) *kein* and *nicht ein*

kein is the usual equivalent of English 'not a' (and using *nicht ein* for *kein* is typical of English learners' German). Nevertheless, there are a few contexts where *nicht ein* is used:

(i) if *ein* is stressed, i.e. 'not (a single) one':

Die TAP besitzt **nicht ein** Flugzeug, denn alle 38 Maschinen sind geleast (*NZZ*)	*TAP doesn't own a single aeroplane, as all 38 planes are leased*

(ii) in direct contrasts:

Das ist eine Ulme, **nicht eine** Eiche	*That's an elm, not an oak*

(iii) *nicht ein* is more usual than *kein* after *wenn* 'if':

Man hätte ihn kaum bemerkt, wenn ihm **nicht ein** Schnurrbart etwas Distinguiertes verliehen hätte	*No-one would have noticed him, if a moustache hadn't given him a rather distinguished air*

(d) Some idiomatic uses of *kein* as a determiner

Sie ist noch **keine** zehn Jahre alt	*She's not yet ten years old*
keine zwei Stunden vor meiner Abreise	within two hours of my departure
Es ist noch **keine** fünf Minuten her	It is less than five minutes ago
Sie ist schließlich **kein** Kind mehr	*After all, she's no longer a child*

(e) The form *keiner* is used as a pronoun

(i) It has endings like those of *einer*, see **Table 5.11**. It is rarely used in the genitive:

Keiner von uns hat es gewusst

Zum Schluss hat sie **kein** (e) **s** der Bücher gekauft

Haben Sie einen Smart-TV? Nein, wir haben **keinen**

In **keinem** dieser neuen Häuser möchte ich wohnen

kein (e) **s** von beiden *neither of them*

(ii) The neuter form *kein(e)s* is used to refer to people of different sex (see **1.1.12b**): *Ich fragte meine Eltern, aber **keins** (von beiden) wusste es.*
(iii) The use of *keiner* for *niemand* to mean 'no-one', 'nobody' (see **5.5.15a**) is frequent in colloquial speech but generally avoided in more formal registers.

5.5.17 *lauter* 'only', 'nothing but'

lauter is indeclinable. It is used only as a determiner, i.e. before nouns:

Dort lag **lauter** Eis und Schnee	*Nothing but ice and snow lay there*
Es sind **lauter** junge Leute gekommen	Only young people came
Er hat **lauter** solchen Unsinn geredet	*He only talked rubbish like that*

5.5.18 *man* 'one'

(a) The indefinite pronoun *man* corresponds to English

‘one’

However, unlike ‘one’, it is not restricted to elevated registers. Rather, it corresponds to the general use of ‘you’ in spoken English, or, frequently, to ‘we’, ‘they’ or ‘people’ (and overusing *Leute* in contexts where *man* would be appropriate is typical of English learners’ German). It is also often used in contexts where English would most naturally use a passive construction, e.g. *Man sagt* ‘It is said’, see **13.4.1**. The corresponding pronouns are possessive *sein* and reflexive *sich*:

Als **man** sich zum Abendessen setzte, fehlte der alte Herr	*When they/we sat down to dinner the old gentleman was missing*
Man hat sich nach dir erkundigt	People were asking after you
Man sollte seinen Freunden helfen	One ought to help one’s friends
Hier spricht **man** meistens unter sich noch Dialekt	*Here people mainly still speak dialect amongst themselves*

man is sometimes used, for reasons of politeness, to refer to the speaker, e.g. *Darf **man** fragen, wohin Sie fahren?* In certain situations this can acquire a note of sarcasm. This is always so when it is used to refer to the listener, e.g. *Hat **man** schon wieder zu tief ins Glas geguckt?*

English-speaking learners should note that *man* is **never** referred back to with *er*, e.g. *Wenn man müde ist, muss **man*** (not *er*) *sich setzen.*

(b) *man* only has a nominative case form

In the accusative and dative *einen* and *einem* (see **5.5.4**) are used:

Man weiß nie, ob er **einen** erkannt hat	*You never know whether he has recognized you*
So Leid es **einem** tut, man muss manchmal hart sein	*However much you regret it, you have to be hard sometimes*

The use of the nominative form *einer* for *man* (see **5.5.4**) is frequent in colloquial speech, but generally avoided in writing.

5.5.19 *manch* 'some', 'many a'

manch always has the rather special sense of stressed 'some', i.e. 'a fair number, but by no means all'. This may be equivalent to English 'many a', and in certain contexts it comes close to the sense of English 'several'. *manch* has a number of alternative forms.

(a) As a determiner, *manch* is most often used in the inflected form *mancher*

i.e. with the endings of *dieser*, see **Table 5.2**.

In the genitive singular masculine and neuter, the form *manchen* is occasionally found besides the more frequent *manches* if the following noun has the ending *-(e)s* (e.g. *manch* ***es*** *Mannes* or *manch* ***en*** *Mannes*).

mancher can be used in the singular or the plural. The singular form (like English 'many a') may put more emphasis on the individual items, whereas the plural (like English stressed 'some') stresses the collectivity. In practice, however, the difference between, for example, *mancher schöne Tag* and *manche schöne Tage* is slight. A following adjective usually has **strong** endings, see **6.1.4**.

An **manchen** Tagen blieb er lange im Bett	*Some days he stayed in bed a long time*
Von der Abzocke **mancher** Skiregionen ist hier keine Spur (*HMP*)	Here there is no sign of the rip-off you get in a good number of skiing areas
ein überhöhter Preis, wie er in **manchen** Reparaturwerkstätten seit Jahren üblich ist (*BILD*)	*an exorbitant price, such as has been usual in some garages for years*

(b) Uninflected *manch* is commonly used as a determiner in the following constructions

(i) before the indefinite article *ein*. This is a less common alternative to inflected *manch*, and it is mainly used in formal writing. The noun is given rather more emphasis:

Da gibt es mancherlei Grund zum Zweifeln – **manch ein** Zeitgenosse wird sagen: zum Verzweifeln (*Zeit*)	*There are many kinds of reasons for doubt – many contemporaries will say: for despair*

(ii) before an adjective, where the uninflected form is a widespread and frequent alternative to the inflected one, especially in the singular:

Sie konnten dem Kanzler **manch** guten Tipp geben (*MM*) …um neben **manch** Komischem auch etliches Entlarvende bieten zu können (*MM*)	*They were able to give the Chancellor many a good tip …to be able to present quite a few revealing things besides much that is comical*

(iii) before neuter nouns. This alternative sounds rather old-fashioned, but it has become fashionable again recently:

Und so ist **manch** Dachstubentalent ins Scheinwerferlicht geraten (*NUZ*)	*In this way many a hidden talent has emerged into the limelight*

(c) As a pronoun *mancher* declines like *dieser*

See **Table 5.2**. It is not used in the genitive:

Mancher hat es nicht geglaubt Das ist schon **manchem** passiert **Manche** trinken Tee, andere lieber Kaffee **manche** meiner Bekannten	*Not many believed it* That has happened to quite a few people Some people drink tea, others prefer coffee *a fair number of my acquaintances*

manch einer is a fairly frequent alternative to inflected *mancher*:

Manch einer musste auf die Mittagspause verzichten (*MM*)	*A fair few had to give up their lunch hour*

5.5.20 *mehrere* 'several'

mehrere is used, as a determiner or a pronoun, in the plural only. It has the same endings as *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**). A following adjective usually has strong endings, see **6.1.4**.

Ich habe **mehrere** Bücher darüber gelesen	*I have read several books about it*
Mehrere standen draußen und warteten	Several people were standing outside waiting
Es ist doch viel spannender, mit **mehreren** Jungen auszugehen, als immer an einem zu kleben (*BILD*)	*But it's much more exciting to go out with several boys than always to stick with one*

5.5.21 *meinesgleichen* 'people like me'

meinesgleichen is indeclinable. Parallel forms can be formed for the other persons, i.e. *deinesgleichen*, *seinesgleichen*, *ihresgleichen*, *unsresgleichen*, *euresgleichen*. If they are used as the subject of a verb, it has the endings of the third person singular. These forms sometimes sound rather old-fashioned, but the first example below is a frequent idiom:

Dieser Wagen hat nicht **seinesgleichen**	*This car has no equal*
Ich und **meinesgleichen** interessieren uns für so etwas nicht	I and people like me aren't interested in things like that
Euresgleichen hat es wirklich leicht	*People like you really have it easy*

5.5.22 *nichts* 'nothing', 'not ... anything'

In speech *nichts* is almost invariably pronounced *nix*. It does not decline:

Aus **nichts** wird **nichts** (*Proverb*)	*Nothing comes of nothing*
Nichts gefiel ihr dort	She didn't like anything there
nichts als Schwierigkeiten	*nothing but difficulties*

nichts is often used with a following adjective used as a noun, which has the strong endings, see **6.2.4b**:

nichts Neues	*nothing new*
Er hat von **nichts Neuem** gesprochen	*He didn't speak of anything new*

It is also common with *von* in partitive constructions, i.e. 'nothing (of)':

Ich möchte **nichts von** dem Essen	*I don't want any of the food*
nichts von alledem	*nothing of all that*

5.5.23 *sämtlich* 'all (the)'

sämtliche inflects like *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**). It is used, as a determiner or a pronoun, in the plural only, as an emphatic alternative to *alle*. A following adjective has weak endings, see **6.1.4**.

Sämtliche gezeigten Tiere wurden am Freitag von Experten bewertet (*SGT*)	*All the exhibited animals were judged on Friday by experts*
die Anschriften **sämtlicher** neuen Mitglieder	*the addresses of all the new members*

sämtliche is rather more limited in meaning than *alle*, since it can refer to all the members of a subgroup of persons or things, but not to all those which are in existence. Thus, one can say *Sämtliche* (or *Alle*) *Bäume in dem Wald wurden gefällt*, but only: *Alle* (not *Sämtliche*)

Menschen sind sterblich.

sämtliche can also be used with a preceding definite article or other determiner, in which case it has the endings of an adjective:

Meine **sämtlichen** Verwandten haben mir geschrieben	*All my relatives wrote to me*

As an adverb, *sämtlich* is used in the meaning 'without exception':

Sämtlich waren sie dem Staat eigen (*Johnson*)	*They all belonged to the state*

5.5.24 *unsereiner* 'someone like me', 'the likes of us'

unsereiner declines like *einer*, see **Table 5.10**. There are parallel forms for the other plural persons, i.e. *eurereiner*, *ihrereiner*, although these are less frequent in practice:

Unsereiner kann das nicht wissen	*Someone like me can't know that*
Mit **unsereinem** spricht sie nie	*She doesn't talk to the likes of us*

In the nominative and accusative, the neuter form *unsereins* is a common alternative to the masculine, especially in colloquial speech.

5.5.25 *viel* 'much', *viele* 'many', *wenig* 'a little', *wenige* 'a few'

The various forms and uses of *viel* 'much', 'many', 'a lot of' and *wenig* '(a) little', '(a) few', 'not many' are broadly similar. Both occur as a determiner, a pronoun, or an adverb. Both have alternative uninflected and inflected forms, in the latter case with the endings of *dieser* (see **Table 5.2**). In certain constructions and uses the uninflected forms are more usual, in others the inflected, without any identifiable difference in meaning. Adjectives following inflected *viele* and *wenige* in the plural usually have strong endings, see **6.1.4**.

ein wenig 'a little' is invariable, see **5.5.5**.

For the comparatives of *viel* and *wenig*, see **7.7.1b**.

(a) *viel* and *wenig* used as pronouns

When ***viel*** and ***wenig*** are used as **pronouns**, they most often have **no endings in the singular**, but they do have **an ending in the plural**. They are not used in the genitive singular:

Sie hat **viel** / **wenig** versucht

Er will **viel** / **wenig** haben

Viel / **Wenig** von dem Kuchen

Sie hat **viel** / **wenig** verraten

Ich bin mit **viel** / **wenig** von dem einverstanden, was du sagst

Viele / **Wenige** von diesen Büchern

Ich habe **viele** / **wenige** gesehen

The inflected neuter singular forms, i.e. **vieles** (nominative or accusative), **vielem** (dative) are occasionally used, chiefly in formal writing:

Sie hat **vieles** versucht	*She has tried a lot of things*
Mit **vielem** bin ich nicht einverstanden	*There's much I don't agree with*

Inflected forms of *wenig* (i.e. *weniges*, *wenigem*) are rare.

(b) *viel* and *wenig* used as determiners

When ***viel*** and ***wenig*** are used as **determiners**, they usually have **no endings in the singular**, but they do have **endings in the plural**. The

genitive singular is scarcely ever used, a phrase with *von* being preferred (see **2.4**):

Dazu ist **viel** Mut nötig	*Much courage is needed for that*
Ich trinke **wenig** Milch	I don't drink much milk
Er handelte mit **viel** Geschick	He acted with a lot of skill
Sie ist mit **wenig** Geld ausgekommen	She managed with little money
die Wirkung von **wenig** Wein	the effect of not much wine
der Genuss von **viel** Obst	eating a lot of fruit
Viele Probleme wurden besprochen	Many problems were discussed
Gestern waren **wenige** Zuschauer im Stadion	There weren't many spectators at the ground yesterday
Er hat **viele** / **wenige** Freunde	He has a lot of/few friends
die Reden **vieler** Politiker	the speeches of a lot of politicians
mit **vielen** / **wenigen** Ausnahmen	*with a lot of/few exceptions*

There are some common exceptions to this usage:

(i) Inflected singular forms are sometimes used in formal registers with a following adjective used as a noun (see **6.2.4b**), e.g. *Er hat **vieles** / **weniges** Interessante gesagt* (less formal: *Er hat **viel** / **wenig** Interessantes gesagt*).

(ii) Inflected forms are quite common in the dative singular masculine and neuter, e.g. *Mit **viel** / **vielem** Zureden konnten wir einiges erreichen.*

(iii) Endings are optional with plural *viel* when it is used with *wie* in questions in the meaning 'how many': *Wissen Sie*, **wie viel(e)** *Stunden Arbeitslose arbeiten dürfen.*

(iv) Uninflected plural forms of both *viel* and *wenig* are occasionally found, mainly in colloquial speech: *Im Grunde interessieren mich furchtbar **wenig** Dinge außer meiner eigenen Arbeit* (*Langgässer*).

(v) Inflected singular forms are used in a few set phrases, notably *vielen Dank.*

(c) *viel* and *wenig* can be used with a preceding definite article or other determiner

They then have the usual adjective endings:

Ich staunte über das **viele** Geld, das er ausgab	*I was amazed at the large amount of money that he spent*
der Mut dieser **vielen** / **wenigen** Frauen	the courage of these many/few women
Sie hat ihr **weniges** Geld verloren	She lost her little bit of money
die **wenigen**, die ihn erkannten	*the few who recognized him*

(d) *wenig* in constructions like *wenig gutes Fleisch* could be ambiguous

It can mean 'not much good meat' or 'not very good meat'. If the context does not resolve the ambiguity, the first meaning can be made clear by replacing *wenig* by *nicht viel*, i.e. *nicht viel gutes Fleisch*, the second by using *nicht sehr*, i.e. *nicht sehr gutes Fleisch.*

Similarly, *weniger gutes Fleisch* could mean 'meat which was less good' or 'a smaller amount of good meat' (English 'less good meat' is similarly ambiguous). This ambiguity can also be resolved if necessary by paraphrasing, i.e. *nicht so gutes Fleisch* or *nicht so viel gutes Fleisch.*

(e) The spelling of *so viel*, *wie viel*, *zu viel*, etc.

These combinations with *viel* and *wenig* are spelled as separate words: *so viel*, *wie viel*, *zu viel*, *zu wenig*, see **21.3.3**.

5.5.26 *welcher* 'some', 'any'

When used as an **indefinite pronoun** *welcher* has the endings of *dieser*, see **Table 5.2**. It is typical of colloquial speech, other alternatives (i.e.

einige, *etwas*, *manche*) usually being preferred in formal registers.

It is used without restriction in the plural, but in the singular it can only refer to a mass noun. It refers back to a noun which has just been mentioned or to 'some people' identified by a following relative clause:

Hast du Käse? Ja, ich habe **welchen**	*Have you got any cheese? Yes, I've got some*
Wenn kein Wein mehr da ist, hole ich uns **welchen**	If there's no wine left, I'll get us some
Ich brauche Marken. Kannst du mir **welche** geben?	I need some stamps. Can you give me some/any?
Hier sind **welche** vom Westfernsehen (*Bednarz*)	*Here are some people from Western television*

For the use of *welcher* as an interrogative, see **5.3.1**, as a relative pronoun, see **5.4.2**.

5.5.27 *wer* 'someone', 'somebody'

wer is used as a pronoun in colloquial speech, where formal registers prefer *jemand* (see **5.5.15**):

Dich hat wieder **wer** angerufen	*Someone's been on the phone for you again*
Die hat wohl wieder **wen** angelächelt	It looks as if she's picked some guy up again
Hast du wenigstens **wem** Bescheid gesagt?	*Have you at least told someone about it?*

For the use of *wer* as an interrogative pronoun, see **5.3.3**.

Adjectives

ADJECTIVES are words which describe, modify, or qualify NOUNS and PRONOUNS. They do this in two main ways:

- either on their own or as part of a longer adjectival phrase. They then form part of a NOUN PHRASE, in which they come immediately **before** the **noun**, **after** any **determiners**. This is called the ATTRIBUTIVE use of the adjective, see **Table 6.1**:

Table 6.1 The noun phrase: adjectives

Determiner	Adjective/adjectival phrase	Noun
das	**kaltes**	Wasser
eine	**schicke**	Auto
viele	**sehr hohe**	Mauer
	jetzt über das Internet erhältliche	Games

- or by being used as a COMPLEMENT to a noun which is the subject or object of a verb, see also **16.6**. This is called the PREDICATIVE use of the adjective:

Helga ist aber **klein**
Er isst die Würstchen **warm**

Das Mädchen lag **krank** im Bett
Sie strich die Wand **gelb**

In German, **attributive adjectives** have endings which indicate the same grammatical categories as nouns, i.e. CASE, NUMBER and GENDER. They are said to DECLINE in AGREEMENT with the noun.

There are **two main sets** of **adjective endings** in German, the so-called STRONG and WEAK declensions, which are shown in Tables 6.2 to 6.5. Which one is used depends on whether or not there is also a determiner in the noun phrase, and what kind of ending it has (if any). **Predicative adjectives** have no endings.

This chapter deals with the forms and uses of adjectives in German:

- the **declension** of adjectives (section **6.1**)
- adjectives used as **nouns** (section **6.2**)
- the use of **cases** with adjectives (section **6.3**)
- the use of **prepositions** with adjectives (section **6.4**)
- the **comparison** of adjectives (section **6.5**)

6.1 Declension and use of adjectives

6.1.1 Attributive and predicative adjectives

In German, adjectives are **only declined** when they are used **attributively**:

ein gut **er** Mensch diese schön **en** Tage frisch **es** Brot

When used **predicatively**, or in phrases separated from the noun, they have **no endings**:

Der Mensch war **gut**	Er trat **ungeduldig** in das Zimmer
Er fühlte sich **gesund**	Wir essen die Möhren **roh**
Mein Vater, in Hamburg **tätig**, …	Das Klima machte ihn **krank**
Sie hielt ihn für **dumm**	Das gilt als **sicher**

Optimistisch wie immer, sie ließ sich von ihrem Vorhaben nicht abhalten ein erstklassiger Kellner, **rasch**, nicht **schwerhörig** (*Wohmann*)

Das Gewehr gehörte zu ihm wie eine Frau zu einem Mann, **schweigsam**,

schön und **zuverlässig** (*E.W. Heine*)

When an adjective is placed after the noun rather than before it, it does not have an ending. This usage is typically poetic: *O Täler **weit**, o Höhen!* (*Eichendorff*), but it is also frequent as a stylistic device in advertising and technical language:

Henkel **trocken**
Whisky **pur**

Schrankwand in Eiche **rustikal**
oder Kiefer **natur**
700 Nadelfeilen **rund** nach DIN 8342

6.1.2 The 'strong' and 'weak' declensions

There are **two basic declensions of the adjective** in German, conventionally labelled the STRONG and WEAK declensions. The **endings** of these declensions are shown in Table 6.2, and they are illustrated in full noun phrases in Tables 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5. **These tables are arranged with the neuters next to the masculines** to show the overlap between the endings more clearly.

Table 6.2 The endings of adjectives in the 'strong' and 'weak' declensions

	Strong			
	Masc.	Neut.	Fem.	Plural
Nom.	-er	-es	-e	
Acc.	-en			
Gen.			-er	
Dat.	-em			-en

	Weak			
	Masc.	Neut.	Fem.	Plural
Nom.	-e			
Acc.				
Gen.	-en			
Dat.				

Table 6.3 The 'strong' adjective endings with no determiner

	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine	Plural
Nom.	guter Wein	gutes Brot	gute Suppe	gute Weine
Acc.	guten Wein	gutes Brot	gute Suppe	gute Weine
Gen.	guten Weins	guten Brots	guter Suppe	guter Weine
Dat.	gutem Wein	gutem Brot	guter Suppe	guten Weinen

Table 6.4 The ‘weak’ adjective endings with the definite article

	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine	Plural
Nom.	der gute Wein	das gute Brot	die gute	die guten
Acc.	den guten	das gute Brot	Suppe	Weine
Gen.	Wein	des guten	die gute	die guten
Dat.	des guten	Brots	Suppe	Weine
	Weins	dem guten	der guten	der guten
	dem guten	Brot	Suppe	Weine
	Wein		der guten	den guten
			Suppe	Weinen

Table 6.5 The ‘mixed’ adjective endings with the indefinite article

	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine
Nom.	ein guter Wein	ein gutes Brot	eine gute Suppe
Acc.	einen guten Wein	ein gutes Brot	eine gute Suppe
Gen.	eines guten	eines guten Brots	einer guten
Dat.	Weins	einem guten Brot	Suppe
	einem guten		einer guten
	Wein		Suppe

(a) The strong declension has relatively more distinctive endings

They are given in Table 6.2 and are **identical to** those of ***dieser*** (see Table 5.2), except that the **genitive singular** masculine and neuter ends in - ***en***:

> ein Stück international **en** Gewässers (*Presse*) die Perfektion rein **en** Klanges (*hifi ad*)

However, with **weak masculine nouns** which have the ending - *en* in the genitive singular (see **1.3.2**), the strong adjective has the ending - *es*, e.g. *das Gesuch obig **es** Adressat **en***, but this combination is infrequent.

(b) The weak declension has only two endings

i.e. - *e* and - *en*, as shown in Table 6.4. - *e* is used in the **nominative singular** of all genders and the **accusative singular feminine and neuter**. - *en* is used in **all other combinations** of case, number and gender.

6.1.3 The use of the 'strong' and 'weak' declensions

The **underlying principle** governing the use of the strong and weak declensions is that the more distinct '**strong**' endings are used if there is **no determiner** in the noun phrase or if the **determiner** has **no ending** to show the case, gender and number of the noun.

The **weak** endings are used if there is a **determiner with an ending**.

(a) The strong declension is used when there is no determiner in the noun phrase

frisch **e** Milch	frisch **es** Obst	durch genau **e**
mit neu **em** Mut	aus deutsch **en** Landen	Beobachtung
		das Niveau französisch
		er Filme

This also applies to adjectives used after **numerals** (including the genitives *zweier* and *dreier*, see **8.1.3a**), after preceding **genitives**, and after the **genitive** of the **relative pronoun**:

zwei schön **e** Pfirsiche	*two fine peaches*
Karls unermüdlich **er** Eifer	Karl's tireless zeal
in Astrids klein **em** Arbeitszimmer	in Astrid's little study
mein Freund, dessen ältest **er** Sohn krank war	*my friend, whose eldest son was ill*

(b) The 'strong' declension is used when the determiner in the noun phrase has no ending

ein älter **er** Herr	unser klein **es** Kind	kein schön **er** Tag
mein neu **es** Kleid	viel indisch **er** Tee	ein paar grün **e** Äpfel
manch reich **es** Land	welch herrlich **es** Wetter!	mit was für englisch **en** Büchern
lauter faul **e** Äpfel	bei solch herrlich **em** Wetter	

An important effect of this rule is that strong endings are used after the **endingless forms** of the **indefinite articles *ein* and *kein*** and of **the possessives** *mein*, *dein*, *unser*, etc. The declension of adjectives after these determiners, which involves both strong and weak endings, is often referred to as **the 'mixed' declension** and it is illustrated in full in **Table 6.5**.

(c) The 'weak' declension is used when the determiner has an ending showing case, number and gender of the noun

This rule follows the principle given above and applies, in particular:

(i) After the **definite article** and **demonstrative** *der*

der weiß **e** Wein	den weiß **en** Wein	des weiß **en** Weines	die weiß **en** Weine

(ii) After the **indefinite articles *ein*** and ***kein*** and **the possessives**, **if** they have **an ending**,

i.e. except in the nominative singular masculine and the nominative/accusative singular neuter, where the strong endings are used, as explained in **(b)** above and illustrated in **Table 6.5**:

einen weiß **en** Wein seinem weiß **en** Wein ihrer weiß **en** Weine

(iii) After ***dieser***, ***jener***, ***jeder*** and ***welcher***:

dieser weiß **e** Wein jenes weiß **en** Weines	diesen weiß **en** Wein jedem weiß **en** Wein	diesen weiß **en** Weinen von welchem weiß **en** Wein?

(d) Two or more adjectives qualifying the same noun all have the same ending

dieser schön **e**, groß **e** Garten gut **es** bayrisch **es** Bier	mein lieb **er** alt **er** Vater die Lösung wichtig **er** politisch **er** Probleme

A deviation from this rule is that in the dative singular masculine or neuter, a further adjective can have the **weak ending** - ***en*** rather than the **strong ending** - ***em***:

mit dunklem bayrisch **em** /bayrisch **en** Bier

nach langem beunruhigend **em** /beunruhigend **en** Schweigen

nach wochenlangem politisch **en** Tauziehen (*Presse*)

Some authorities do not accept the weak ending - *en* in such contexts as standard and consider only the strong ending - *em* to be correct, or that the weak ending may only be used if the second adjective is closely linked to the meaning of the noun in some way (as is arguably the case in the first example above). However, the weak and the strong endings are in practice equally frequent in modern written German, and the claim that there is (or should be) a difference in meaning between the alternatives is not borne out by usage. The weak ending is the norm with adjectives used as nouns, see **6.2.2b**.

(e) The adjective is still declined if a noun is understood

'one' often has to be supplied in the equivalent English construction:

Welches Kleid hast du gewählt? Das **rote**	*Which dress did you choose? The red one*
Ich habe mein Taschenmesser verloren. Ich muss mir ein **neues** kaufen	I've lost my penknife. I'll have to buy myself a new one
Deutsche Weißweine sind süßer als **französische**	*German white wines are sweeter than French ones*

Adjectives used in this way with a noun understood are spelled with a small initial letter, not a capital, since they are not adjectives being used as nouns, see **6.2.1** and **21.2.1b**.

(f) Adjectives governing more than one noun with a different gender cannot be understood

In English an adjective (with or without a determiner) can be understood in a series of linked noun phrases, e.g. *my old aunt and uncle*, *dear Ruth and Martin*, *the new table and chair s*. This is not possible in German if the nouns involved are of a different gender or number. The adjective (and determiner) must be repeated, with different endings as appropriate:

mein alt **er** Onkel und mein **e** alt **e** Tante	lieb **e** Ruth, lieb **er** Martin
der neu **e** Tisch und die neu **en** Stühle	

(g) In a few special cases an attributive adjective has no ending

(i) In older German, adjectives sometimes lacked the strong ending - *es* before a neuter singular noun in the nominative or accusative, and this usage is retained in a few idioms and set

phrases, e.g.:

etwas auf gut Glück tun	*to take a chance*
sich lieb Kind machen	to ingratiate oneself
Gut Ding will Weile haben	Nothing good is done in a hurry
Ruhig Blut bewahren!	Keep calm!
Kölnisch Wasser	eau de Cologne
ein gehörig/gut Stück	a substantial/good piece
ein gut Teil	*a large proportion*

(ii) Some foreign adjectives ending in a full vowel do not take endings. Many of these are colour terms, e.g. *lila, rosa*:

eine **klasse** Idee	ein **lila** Mantel	die **orange** Farbe
ein **rosa** Kleid	eine **prima** Ware	eine **super** Schau

In writing, a suffix such as - *farben* or -*farbig* is an acceptable alternative for the colour terms, e.g. *ein* **rosafarbenes** *Kleid*. In colloquial speech, an - *n*- is sometimes inserted as a base for the usual endings, e.g. *ein* **rosanes** *Kleid*. This is widespread but considered incorrect in written German.

(iii) An adjective used as an adverb to qualify a following adjective has no ending, see also **7.4.1c**. Compare the difference between the following:

ein unheilbar **er**, fauler Junge	*an incurable, lazy boy*
ein unheilbar fauler Junge	*an incurably lazy boy*

However, this distinction is not always clear-cut, and the first of a pair of adjectives is sometimes left uninflected even if it is not being used as an adverb. This is a common stylistic device in writing:

ein reingebürtiger Pole von **traurig** edler Gestalt (*Grass*)	*a pure-bred Pole with a sad, noble figure*
seine **hochrot** abstehenden Ohren (*Grass*)	*his deep red, protuberant ears*

einzig regularly has no ending if it can be considered as qualifying a following adjective, e.g. *die einzig(e) mögliche Lösung*. For similar usage with *derartig*, see **5.1.6c**.

(iv) Adjectives in -*er* from **town names** do not add endings, e.g.:

die Leipziger Messe, die Lüneburger Heide, der Kölner Dom

(v) Adjectives in -***er*** from **numerals** do not add endings, e.g. *die neunziger Jahre* 'the nineties'.

(vi) Endingless adjectives are used with **names of letters** and **numerals** if no determiner is present:

groß *A*, klein *z*, römisch *IV*, arabisch *4*

(vii) ***halb*** and ***ganz*** have no endings before geographical names used without an article:

halb Berlin, ganz Deutschland, ganz Europa

See **8.3.2** for details on the use of *halb*.

(h) Adjectives used after a personal pronoun usually have strong endings

ich arm **er** Deutscher

Wer hat dich dumm **en** Kerl gesehen?

Wer konnte euch treulos **en** Verrätern helfen?

Wer kümmert sich um uns früher **e** Kollegen?

However, weak endings are found in a few contexts:

(i) In the (rarely used) dative singular, weak or strong endings can be used in the masculine and neuter, e.g. *mir mittellos* ***em*** */ mittellos* ***en*** *Mann*, but the feminine almost always has weak endings, e.g. *Er hat mir alt* ***en*** (rarely: *alt* ***er***) *Frau geschmeichelt.*

(ii) Weak endings are more usual in the nominative plural: *wir jung **en** Kollegen*; *ihr hilflos **en** Kerle*. However, for 'we Germans' and 'you Germans' *wir Deutsch **e*** and *ihr Deutsch **e***, with strong endings, are in common use, although they are about half as frequent in practice as *wir Deutsch **en*** and *ihr Deutsch **en***.

6.1.4 Adjective declension after indefinites and quantifiers

Following the principle outlined in section **6.1.3**, adjectives usually have 'weak' endings following any determiner which itself has an ending showing the case, number and gender of the noun. However, usage is at variance with this principle after some of the indefinites and quantifiers dealt with in section **5.5**, and there is still a certain amount of variation with all of them, particularly in the plural.

(a) In the singular the 'weak' endings are normally used after all indefinites and quantifiers

mancher brav **e** Mann	mit folgender nachdrücklich **en** Warnung
durch irgendwelchen pur **en** Unsinn	mit einigem bühnentechnisch **en** Aufwand (*Zeit*)
mit allem möglich **en** Fleiß	aus wenigem schlecht **en** Wein
von vielem kalt **en** Wasser	
solches dumm **e** Gerede	

The only frequent exception to this rule is that *jeglicher* is most often followed by strong endings, e.g. *jegliches **organisches** Leben* (*Grzimek*).

(b) In the plural usage varies with different indefinites and quantifiers

(i) Adjectives after ***alle***, ***beide*** and ***sämtliche*** in the plural usually have the '**weak**' endings

alle fremd **en** Truppen	sämtliche schön **en** Bücher
beide bekannt **en** Politiker	aller interessiert **en** Zuschauer

'Strong' endings are occasionally found, especially after *beide*, e.g. *beide bekannte Politiker*.

(ii) Adjectives after ***irgendwelche*** and ***solche*** in the plural can have either 'weak' or 'strong' endings, but '**weak' endings are more frequent**:

solche schön **en** (*less common*: schöne) Tage

irgendwelcher interessiert **en** (*less common*: interessierter) Zuschauer

(iii) Adjectives after ***manche*** in the plural can have either 'weak' or 'strong' endings, but '**strong' endings are more frequent**:

manche schön **e** (*less common*: schönen) Aussichten

(iv) Adjectives after ***einige***, ***etliche***, ***folgende***, ***mehrere***, ***viele***, ***wenige*** in the plural usually have '**strong' endings**:

einige neu **e** ICE-Verbindungen	etliche fremd **e** Besucher
folgende bezeichend **e** Beispiele	mehrere groß **e** Städte
vieler nichtbeamtet **er** Österreicher (*Kurier*)	weniger günstig **er** Zeiten

Weak endings are occasionally found, most often in the genitive plural, e.g. *einiger groß **en** ausländisch **en** Firmen* for (more frequent) *einiger groß **er** ausländisch **er** Firmen*.

(v) For adjective endings after *ander*, see **5.5.2.**

(c) Indefinites and quantifiers preceded by another determiner are declined like adjectives

Some indefinites and quantifiers can be preceded by another determiner, i.e. by a definite or indefinite article, one of the demonstratives *dieser* or *jener*, or by one of the possessives *mein*, *dein*, etc. They are then **treated like adjectives** and have a 'weak' or 'strong' adjective ending according to the usual rules, as does any further following adjective:

eine **solche** interessante Nachricht
mit der **folgenden** krassen Behauptung
mit seinem **wenigen** deutschen Geld

aller **solchen** guten Wünsche
diese **vielen** alten Dörfer
mein **sämtliches** kleines Vermögen

(d) Adjectives after endingless indefinites and quantifiers

Some indefinites and quantifiers have alternative forms without endings, as explained under the relevant determiner in section **5.5**. These endingless forms are followed by adjectives with strong endings, following the general principle given in **(b)** above:

viel deutsch **es** Geld manch schön **er** Tag solch dumm **es** Gerede

6.1.5 Irregularities in the spelling of some adjectives

(a) The spelling of inflected adjectives in - *el*, - *en*, - *er*

These often lose the - *e* - of the root, or occasionally the - *e* - of the ending.

(i) **Adjectives in** - ***el*** drop the - *e* - when an ending is added:

ein **dunkler** Wald, eine **respektable** Leistung

When used as a noun, *dunkel* drops the - *e*- of the ending, e.g. *im Dunkel* ***n*** 'in the dark'.

(ii) **Adjectives in** - ***en*** can drop the - *e*- when an ending is added.

This is usual in everyday speech, but uncommon in writing: *eine* ***metallene*** (rarely written: *metallne*) *Stimme*, *ein* ***seltener*** (rarely written: *seltner*) *Vogel*.

(iii) **Adjectives in** - ***er***

Foreign adjectives and those with - *au* - or - *eu* - before the - *er* always drop the - *e*-:

eine **makabre** Geschichte, mit **teuren** Weinen, durch **saure** Milch

Other adjectives in *-er* usually keep the - *e*- in written German, although it is usually dropped in speech: *eine* ***muntere*** (rarely written: *muntre*) *Frau*. For the spelling of declined *ander*, which is a special case, see **5.5.2**.

The - *e* - of the comparative ending - *er* (see **6.5**) is rarely omitted in writing, e.g. *eine* ***bessere*** (rarely in writing: *bessre*) *Lösung*.

(iv) The - ***e*** - is quite often omitted in - ***el*** - or - ***er*** - in the **middle of an adjective** which has endings, e.g. **neb(e)lige** Tage, eine **wäss(e)rige** Suppe, etc.

(b) hoch 'high'

hoch has the special form ***hoh*** - to which the usual endings are added:

der Berg ist **hoch**, *but*: ein **hoher** Berg

(c) A few adjectives have alternative base forms with or

without final - *e*

e.g. *Er ist feig* **or** *feige* 'He is cowardly'. These adjectives are:

blöd(e)	bös(e)	fad(e)	irr(e)	leis(e)	mild(e)
müd(e)	öd(e)	träg(e)	trüb(e)	vag(e)	zäh(e)

With all except *blöd(e)*, *mild(e)* and *zäh(e)*, the **alternative with - *e*** tends to be preferred in written German. In speech the form without - *e* is more frequent unless the adjective is stressed.

6.1.6 Extended attribute phrases

In German extended adjectival phrases can be used attributively, i.e. before the noun, in a way quite unlike any English construction. Such phrases include a noun phrase (in the case governed by the adjective) or a prepositional phrase (with the preposition governed by the particular adjective), and they can sometimes be very long. This EXTENDED ATTRIBUTE construction is very frequent in formal German, especially in technical and official registers. In English such phrases can sometimes be placed after the noun, but most commonly they correspond to an English relative clause:

dieses **seinem Vorgesetzten äußerst nützliche** Gespräch	*this conversation which was very useful to his superior*
zum Einsatz bereite Truppen	troops (who are) ready to be deployed
eine **von rhetorischen Effekten freie** Rede	a speech (which is/was) free of rhetorical devices
eine **für sie ganz typische** Haltung	*an attitude (which is/was) quite typical of her*

This construction is very frequent with participles, see **11.5.1f**.

6.2 Adjectives used as nouns

6.2.1 Any adjective can be used as a noun in German

It is then written with an initial capital letter:

der **Alte** *the old man*	die **Alte** *the old woman*
das **Alte** *old things*	die **Alten** *the old people*

English cannot turn adjectives into nouns as easily, except in a few restricted cases when referring to groups of people, e.g. 'the young', 'the old', 'the Dutch', 'the good, the bad and the ugly', etc., and a dummy noun like 'man', 'woman', 'thing(s)', 'people' usually has to be added. Overusing words like *Ding* or *Leute* where an adjective used as a noun would be more appropriate is a characteristic feature of the German of English learners.

Idiomatic German exploits fully the possibilities of concise expression offered by the fact that adjectives can be used as nouns in this way. In particular, they are often used where full clauses would be needed in English:

Die Farbe dieser Vögel war das für mich **Interessante**	*The colour of these birds was what interested me*
Er hat sich über das **Gesagte** aufgeregt	He got annoyed about what had been said
Das **Erschreckende** an diesem Vorfall war seine scheinbare Unabwendbarkeit	What was terrifying about this occurrence was its apparent inevitability
Die gerade **Eingestiegenen** waren ein älterer Herr und eine elegante Dame	The people who had just got in were an elderly man and an elegant lady
ein Ort, wo das irgendwie zu denkende **Konkrete** unwiederbringlich in **Abstraktes** umschlägt	*a point where concrete reality, however it may be imagined, becomes irrevocably abstract*

Adjectives used as nouns in this way are different from adjectives being used with a preceding noun understood. These are spelled with a **small** initial letter, see **6.1.3e**. Compare *Kennst du den Alten?* 'Do you know

the old man?' with *Hast du einen neuen Wagen gekauft? Nein, einen alten* (*Wagen* understood). 'Did you buy a new car? No, an old one.'

6.2.2 The declension of adjectives used as nouns

(a) Adjectives used as nouns decline like attributive adjectives

They have weak or strong endings according to the rules given in **6.1**. They thus have the same endings as any preceding adjective, e.g. *ein zuverlässig* ***er*** *Angestellt* ***er***, *von einer unbekannt* ***en*** *Fremd* ***en***. The declension with the definite and indefinite articles of a typical masculine adjective used as a noun, *der Angestellte* 'employee', is shown in **Table 6.6**.

Table 6.6 Declension of adjectives used as nouns

		Definite article	Indefinite article
Singular	**Nominative**	der Angestellte	ein Angestellter
	Accusative	den Angestellten	einen Angestellten
	Genitive	des Angestellten	eines Angestellten
	Dative	dem Angestellten	einem Angestellten
Plural	**Nominative**	die Angestellten	Angestellte
	Accusative	die Angestellten	Angestellte
	Genitive	der Angestellten	Angestellter
	Dative	den Angestellten	Angestellten

der *Angestellte* is naturally only used of a male employee. A female employee will be ***die*** *Angestellte*, ***eine*** *Angestellte*, with the appropriate endings, see **6.2.3**.

Adjectives used as nouns in this way should not be confused with

'weak' masculine nouns, whose declension looks quite similar, see Table 1.8. Note the difference between the endings of adjectives used as nouns and 'weak' masculine (or other regular) nouns:

Adjective used as noun	**'Weak' masculine (or other) noun**
der Deutsche, des Deutschen *German NB*: ein Deutsch **er**	der Franzose, des Franzosen *Frenchman NB*: ein Franzos **e**
das Junge *young of an animal NB*: ein Jung **es**	der Junge, des Jungen *boy NB*: ein Jung **e**
die Fremde *female stranger NB*: mit der Fremd **en**	die Fremde *foreign parts NB*: in der Fremd **e** *abroad*

(b) In a few contexts adjectives used as nouns decline in a different way from other adjectives

(i) In the **dative singular** and the **genitive plural** the adjective used as a noun can have the **weak ending** - ***en*** if preceded by an adjective with the strong endings - *em* or - *er*. This is a general rule with masculine nouns, but less regular with feminines or in the genitive plural:

> Ich sprach mit Karls alt **em** Bekannt **en**, mit Helmuts englisch **er** Bekannt **en** /Bekannt **er**
>
> die Freistellung zahlreich **er** Angestellt **er** /Angestellt **en**

(ii) In apposition (see **2.6**), the weak ending is used in the dative singular even if there is no determiner:

> Er sprach mit Karl Friedrichsen, Angestellt **en** (*rarely*: Angestellt **em**) der BASF in Ludwigshafen
>
> Er sprach mit Heike König, Angestellt **en** (*never*: Angestellt **er**) der BASF in Ludwigshafen

In practice, constructions like this are avoided. The nominative case is used: *mit Karl Friedrichsen, Angestellter der BASF*, or an

article is added: *mit Karl Friedrichsen, dem/einem Angestellten der BASF.*

(iii) The neuters *das Äußere*, *das Ganze* and *das Innere* now usually have strong endings in the nominative/accusative singular after the indefinite article or the possessives if another adjective comes first, i.e.: *sein schlichtes Äußer* ***es***, *ein einheitliches Ganz* ***es***, *mein eigenes Inner* ***es***. Using the weak ending in these contexts, i.e. *sein schlichtes Äußer* ***e***, etc., is no longer current.

6.2.3 Masculine and feminine adjectival nouns

(a) Masculine and feminine adjectival nouns usually refer to people

The gender is indicated by using the appropriate article, e.g. ***der*** *Fremde* 'the (male) stranger', ***die*** *Fremde* 'the (female) stranger'. Many common ones like the following correspond to simple nouns in English:

der Abgeordnete *representative*
der Adlige *aristocrat*
der Angestellte *employee*
der Asylsuchende *asylum-seeker*
der Beamte *civil servant*
der Bekannte *acquaintance*
der Deutsche *German*
der Erwachsene *adult*
der Freiwillige *volunteer*
der Fremde *stranger*
der Gefangene *prisoner*
der Geistliche *clergyman*
der Gesandte *emissary*
der Heilige s *aint*
der Industrielle *industrialist*
der Jugendliche *young person*
der Obdachlose *homeless person*
der Reisende *traveller*
der Staatsangehörige *citizen*
der Überlebende *survivor*
der Verlobte *fiancé*
der Verwandte *relative*
der Vorgesetzte *superior*
der Vorsitzende *chairman*

(b) A few feminine adjectival nouns are special cases

(i) A few referring to things are always feminine, e.g.:

die Elektrische *tram* (older S. Ger.)	die Rechte, Linke *right, left (hand)*; (*political*) *right, left*

e.g. *überdrüssig des Terrors einer revolutionären Linken* (*SZ*)

(ii) Some feminines which are in origin adjectival nouns are now often treated as regular feminine nouns:

die Brünette *the brunette*	die Parallele *the parallel (line)*
die Gerade *the straight line*	die Variable *the variable*
die Horizontale *the horizontal*	die Vertikale *the vertical*

Usage with these is rather variable. Especially in the case of the mathematical terms, both forms are commonly used, and, for example, *in der Horizontal **en*** is rather more frequent than *in der Horizontal **e***. On the other hand, *die Brünette* is now almost only ever used as a regular feminine noun.

(iii) *die Illustrierte* 'the magazine' is most often treated as an adjectival noun, e.g. *Ich habe zwei Illustriert **e** gekauft* and *in dieser Illustriert **en***. However, regular noun endings are still not unusual, e.g. *zwei Illustriert **e*** or *in dieser Illustriert **e***.
(iv) Exceptionally, the feminine form corresponding to *der Beamte* is *die Beamtin*. This is a regular feminine noun, with the plural *die Beamtinnen*.

6.2.4 Neuter adjectival nouns

(a) Most neuter adjectival nouns denote abstract or collective ideas

Es ist schon **Schlimmes** passiert	*Bad things have already happened*
Er hat **Hervorragendes** geleistet	He has achieved outstanding things
der Schauer des **Verbotenen** und	the frightening fascination of what

Versagten (*Zweig*)	is forbidden or denied
zugleich immer aufbauend auf das **Erreichte** (*Mercedes advert*)	*at the same time always building on what has been achieved*

Note, though, *das Junge* 'the young' (of an animal), see **1.1.11**.

The names of regions within the German-speaking countries are often given in the form of neuter adjectival nouns, e.g.:

Nach der Wende zogen sie ins **Mecklenburgische**	Hier sind wir im **Thüringischen**
Vier maskierte Männer überfallen eine Spielhalle **im Hessischen** (*BrZ*)	

(b) Neuter adjectival nouns are frequently used after indefinites

especially after *alles*, *etwas*, *nichts*, *viel(es)*, *wenig*, see **5.5**. These have weak or strong endings depending on the ending of the indefinite, e.g.:

all **es** Gut **e**	nichts Neu **es**
von all **em** Gut **en**	von nichts Neu **em**
weiter **es** Interessant **e**	lauter Neu **es**
folgend **es** Neu **e**	viel/wenig Interessant **es**
viel **es** Interessant **e**	von viel Interessant **em**
von viel **em** Interessant **en**	

(c) Names of languages have the form of neuter adjectival nouns

For the use of the article with these, see **4.2.2d**.

(i) The most common form is a neuter adjective.

This form is used to refer to the language in a specific context, or when an adjective precedes it. It has no endings, except that,

optionally, - *s* can be added in the genitive (see **1.3.5b**):

Wir lernen **Spanisch**, **Französisch**, **Russisch**, **Englisch**

Die Aussprache des modernen **Deutsch(s)**

eine Übersetzung aus **dem amerikanischen Englisch**

(ii) To refer to the language in a general sense, a declined adjectival neuter noun is used.

It always has the definite article:

Das Englische ist **dem Deutschen** verwandt

eine Übersetzung aus **dem Tschechischen**

This form cannot be used with a preceding adjective; if an adjective is present, then the endingless form is used:

Mit meinem schlechten Deutsch komme ich nicht weit

(d) Names of colours

These usually have the form of a neuter adjectival noun which has no endings, except that - *s* is usually added in the genitive singular. The plural is endingless in written German, though - *s* is sometimes used in speech:

das **Grün** der Wiesen	dieses hässlichen **Gelbs**
von einem glänzenden **Rot**	die beiden **Blau** (*spoken*: Blaus)
in **Schwarz** gekleidet	

In a few set phrases with the definite article, colour nouns are declined:

ins **Grüne** fahren	Es ist das **Gelbe** vom Ei
ins **Schwarze** treffen	das **Blaue** vom Himmel herunter

6.3 Cases with adjectives

Many adjectives can be used with a noun dependent on them, which then takes a particular case – we say that the adjective 'governs' a noun in that case. The case used depends on the individual adjective:

- **dative**: *Sie ist* **ihrem Bruder** sehr ähnlich (section **6.3.1**)
- **accusative**: *Ich bin* **den Lärm** nicht gewohnt (section **6.3.2**)
- **genitive**: *Sie ist* **der deutschen Sprache** mächtig (section **6.3.3**)

6.3.1 Adjectives which govern the dative

(a) The dative is the most common case used with adjectives

Sie waren **ihrem Freund** beim Umzug behilflich	*They helped their friend when he moved house*
Ihre Meinung ist **uns** wichtig	Your opinion is important to us
Er war **seinem Gegner** überlegen	He surpassed his opponent
Ein **ihr** unbekannter Mann trat herein	*A man she didn't know walked in*

The following list gives a selection of frequent adjectives which govern the dative.

ähnlich* *like, similar*	heilig *holy, sacred*
angenehm† *agreeable*	hinderlich *awkward*
begreiflich *comprehensible*	klar *obvious*
behilflich *helpful*	lästig† *troublesome*

bekannt *known, familiar*
bequem *comfortable*
bewusst *known*
böse *angry*
dankbar *grateful*
eigen *peculiar*
entbehrlich† *unnecessary*
ergeben *devoted, attached*
fern *distant*
fremd *strange*
gefährlich† *dangerous*
gefällig *obliging*
nicht geheuer *scary*
gehorsam *obedient*
geläufig *familiar*
gemeinsam *common*
gerecht *just*
gesinnt *inclined*
gewogen (lit.) *well-disposed*
günstig *favourable*
leicht† *easy*
möglich† *possible*
nahe* *near, close*
nötig *necessary*
nützlich† *useful*
peinlich† *embarrassing*
schädlich† *injurious, harmful*
schuldig *owing*
schwer *difficult*
teuer *expensive*
treu* *faithful*
überlegen *superior*
verhasst *hateful*
verständlich† *comprehensible*
wichtig† *important*
widerlich *repugnant*
willkommen *welcome*
zugänglich† *accessible*
zuträglich *beneficial*

The adjective usually **follows** the noun (or pronoun) dependent on it, but those marked with * in the list above may come before a noun. Those marked with† may alternatively be used with *für* (before or after the adjective), e.g. *Das war* **für mich** unangenehm/unangenehm **für mich**, and *böse* can also be used with *auf* or *mit* (see **6.4.1a**).

(b) Some adjectives which govern the dative are only used predicatively

i.e. they are only used in conjunction with the verb *sein*:

Sie ist **mir** zuwider — *She is repugnant to me*

These are:

abhold (arch., lit.) *ill-disposed* — hold (arch., lit.) *favourably disposed*

feind (arch., lit.) *hostile*	untertan *subordinate*
freund (lit.) *friendly*	zugetan *well-disposed*
gram (lit.) *angry (with)*	zuwider *repugnant*

This construction is also used with the adjectives meaning 'all the same', e.g.:

Das ist **mir** gleich *That's all the same to me*

i.e. *einerlei*, *egal* (coll.), *gleich*, *piepe* (coll.), *schnuppe*, *wurs(ch)t* (coll.)

zugetan can be used attributively, e.g. *Madame de Pompadour, die den Künsten* **zugetane** Mätresse Ludwigs XV (*HAZ*).

(c) Adjectives expressing sensations

Many adjectives which express a sensation are used in the predicate of *sein* with a dative of the person experiencing the sensation, e.g.:

Es ist mir **heiß**, **kalt**, **schlecht**, **übel**, **warm**

More detail on these is given in **2.5.4c**.

6.3.2 Adjectives which govern the accusative

These are all used in constructions with *sein* or *werden*, although some can also be used with a following *dass* -clause or an infinitive clause with *zu*.

jdn./etwas * **gewahr** werden (lit.)	*to become aware of sth./sb. We realized our mistake*
Wir wurden unseren Irrtum gewahr	
etwas **gewohnt** sein Ich bin den Lärm nicht gewohnt	to be used to sth. I'm not used to the noise
etwas * **leid** sein Ich bin das schlechte Essen leid	to be tired of /fed up with I'm fed up with the bad food

etwas/jdn. **los** sein/werden Endlich bin ich den Schnupfen los	to be/get rid of sth./sb. At last I've got rid of the cold
etwas/jdn.* **satt** sein/haben Er ist/hat es gründlich satt	to be sick of sb./sth. He's thoroughly sick of it
jdm. etwas **schuldig** sein Sie ist ihm eine Erklärung schuldig	to owe sb. sth. She owes him an explanation
etwas * **wert** sein Es ist das Papier nicht wert, auf dem es steht (*MM*)	*to be worth sth. It's not worth the paper it's written on*

(i) The adjectives asterisked can be used with a genitive in formal registers, see **6.3.3**; in the case of *satt* this is only possible in conjunction with *sein*, not with *haben*.
(ii) *schuldig* is used with a genitive in the sense of 'guilty', e.g. *Er ist des Verbrechens schuldig* 'He is guilty of the crime'.

6.3.3 Adjectives which govern the genitive

(a) The genitive with adjectives is mainly restricted to formal German

A number of the adjectives concerned have alternative constructions in less formal registers, as indicated below, while a few adjectives most often used with a following accusative (see **6.3.2**) can alternatively be used with a genitive in more formal registers. With the exception of *bar*, these adjectives always follow the noun:

bar *devoid of*	Seine Handlungsweise war bar **aller Vernunft** *His action was devoid of all reason*
bewusst *conscious of*	Ich war mir **meines Irrtums** bewusst *I was conscious of my mistake*
fähig *capable of* (*or with* zu + *noun*, see **6.4.1a**)	Er ist **einer solchen Tat** nicht fähig *He is not capable of such a deed*
froh *pleased at* (*usually*: über)	Sie war **seines Erfolges** froh *She*
gewahr *aware of* (*more often with acc.*)	
gewiss *certain of*	
mächtig *master of*	

müde *tired of*
schuldig *guilty of* (*see* 6.3.2)
sicher *sure of*
überdrüssig *tired of* (*or, rarely, with acc.*)
wert *worthy of* (*often with acc.*)
würdig *worthy of*

was pleased about his success
Wir wurden **unseres Irrtums** gewahr *We became aware of our mistake*
Sie können **meiner Unterstützung** gewiss sein *You can be certain of my support*
Sie ist **des Deutschen** absolut mächtig *She has a complete command of German*
Wer **des Schauens** und **Kaufen** s müde war (*SGT*) *Whoever was tired of looking (at things) and buying (them)*
Der Angeklagte ist **des Hochverrats** schuldig *The accused is guilty of high treason*
Er ist sich **seiner Sache** noch nicht sicher (*Zeit*) *He is not quite sure of his ground*
Er sagte, er sei **des Lebens** überdrüssig (*HMP*) *He said he was tired of life*
der Wille, erhalten zu wollen, was **des Erhaltens** wert ist (*SGT*) *the desire to keep what is worth keeping*
Er ist **dieser Ehre** nicht würdig *He is not worthy of this honour*

Note that a reflexive pronoun is always inserted when *bewusst* and *sicher* are used with a genitive.

(b) *voll* and *voller* are used in a number of alternative constructions

(i) In formal written language ***voll*** and ***voller*** are used with the **genitive**:

> *Das Theater war voll* **aufmerksamer Zuschauer**, *ein Korb voller* **grüner Äpfel**

(ii) Alternatively, ***voll*** and ***voller*** can be used with the dative singular

ein Korb voll **grünem Obst**, mit einer Schüssel voller **warmem Wasser** (*Grass*)

(iii) With a noun standing alone, ***voll*** or ***voller*** can be used with a **nominative**:

> *ein Korb voll* ***Obst****, voll(er)* **Äpfel**

(iv) With a noun qualified by an adjective, ***voll von*** can be used:

> *ein Korb* **voll von** herrlichem Obst, roten Äpfeln

(v) ***voll mit*** is particularly frequent in spoken registers:

> *ein Korb* **voll mit** herrlichem Obst, roten Äpfeln

(c) Adjectives governing the genitive which are restricted to predicate use

Some adjectives governing the genitive are largely restricted to use in the predicate after *sein*, *bleiben* and/or *werden*. Most of them are used only in formal (particularly legal or official) written German:

ansichtig	bedürftig	eingedenk	geständig	gewärtig	habhaft
(un)kundig	ledig	teilhaftig	verdächtig	verlustig	

Examples from official legal language:

Er ist **der Bürgerrechte** für verlustig erklärt worden	*He has been deprived of his civic rights*
Sie versuchen mittlerweile **der Verbrecher** lateinamerikanischer Militärdiktaturen habhaft zu werden (*KlZ*)	*In the meantime they are attempting to arrest criminals from Latin American military dictatorships*

6.4 Adjectives with prepositions

Many adjectives can be linked to a noun in a prepositional construction, in which case we speak of the adjective 'governing' a particular preposition:

Das ist **von** dem Wetter **abhängig**	Er war **mit** meinem Entschluss **einverstanden**
die **um** ihre Kinder **besorgte** Mutter	

Which preposition is used depends on the individual adjective, and the preposition often retains little of its full meaning. A selection of adjectives governing prepositions is given below, especially those which are frequent or which have a construction different from their usual English equivalents.

The prepositional phrase may precede or follow the adjective. If it contains a noun it commonly comes before the adjective, but it may follow; if it contains a pronoun it almost invariably follows, e.g.:

either:	Er ist **über den neuen Lehrling** verärgert
or (less usual):	Er ist verärgert **über den neuen Lehrling**
but always:	Er ist verärgert **über ihn**

(a) Frequently used adjectives governing a preposition

abhängig von	*dependent on*
angewiesen auf etwas/jdn. sein	to have to rely on sth./sb.
Wir waren **auf uns selber** angewiesen	We had to rely on ourselves
ärgerlich auf/über	annoyed with
***arm** an	poor in
aufmerksam auf Sie machte mich **auf meinen Irrtum** aufmerksam	aware of She pointed out my mistake
begeistert von/über	enthusiastic about
berechtigt zu Sie sind **zu diesem Vorwurf** berechtigt	justified in You are justified in making this reproach
bereit zu Die Truppen waren **zum Einsatz** bereit	ready for The troops were ready to be deployed
besorgt um	anxious about
bezeichnend für	characteristic of
blass, bleich vor Er war völlig blass/bleich **vor Entsetzen**	pale with He was pale with terror
böse auf/mit Bist du böse **auf mich / mit mir** ? (*or* Bist du **mir** böse? see **6.3.1a**)	angry, cross with Are you annoyed with me?
charakteristisch für	characteristic of
dankbar für Ich war ihm **für seine Hilfe** dankbar	grateful for I was grateful to him for his help
durstig nach	thirsty for
eifersüchtig auf	jealous of
einverstanden mit Bist du **mit diesem Vorschlag** einverstanden?	in agreement with Do you agree with this proposal?
empfänglich für	*susceptible, receptive to*
empfindlich gegen Sie ist sehr empfindlich **gegen Kälte**	sensitive to She is very sensitive to cold
ersichtlich aus Das ist **aus seiner letzten Bemerkung** ersichtlich	obvious, clear from That is clear from what he just said
fähig zu (or genitive, see **6.3.3a**) Sie ist **zu einer solchen Tat** nicht fähig	capable of She is not capable of doing anything like that
fertig mit etwas sein Bist du **mit dem Essen** schon fertig?	to have finished sth. Have you already finished your meal?
geeignet für/zu Er ist **für diese / zu**	suitable for He is not suitable for that kind of work
	ready, prepared for Get ready for his reaction

dieser Arbeit nicht geeignet	keen on I am so keen on tennis, he said
gefasst auf Mach dich gefasst **auf seine Reaktion** !	*extremely curious about I am dying to see that film*
geil auf (*coll.*) Ich bin so geil auf Tennis, sagte er (*MM*)	
gespannt auf Ich bin **auf diesen Film** sehr gespannt	
gewöhnt an Ich bin jetzt **an das englische Bier** gewöhnt	*accustomed/used to I am used to English beer now*
gierig nach	greedy for
gleichgültig gegen/gegenüber	indifferent to(wards)
höflich zu/gegenüber	polite to(wards)
hungrig nach	hungry for
interessiert an	interested in
müde von Er war müde **von der schweren Arbeit** (see also **6.3.3a**)	tired from He was tired from working so hard
neidisch auf	envious of
neugierig auf	curious about
***reich** an	rich in
scharf auf (*coll.*) Er ist scharf **auf seine Rechte**	keen on He is keen on his rights
schuld an etwas sein/haben Wer war/hatte **an dem Streit** schuld?	to be blamed for sth. Who was to blame for the argument?
sicher vor	safe from
stolz auf	proud of
stumm vor	dumb with
typisch für	typical of
überzeugt von	convinced of
unabhängig von	independent of
verheiratet mit	married to
verliebt in Sie ist **in den Bruder** ihrer Freundin verliebt	in love with She is in love with her friend's brother
verschieden von	different to/from
versessen auf Er ist versessen **auf alte Sportwagen**	(very, mad) keen on He is mad keen on old sports cars
verwandt mit	related to
vorbereitet auf	prepared for
	mad at, furious with He was mad at

wütend auf Er war wütend **auf seine Chefin**	*his boss*
zornig auf	angry with
zuständig für	*responsible for*

If they are governed by an adjective, *auf* and *über* are always followed by the accusative case, and *vor* is always followed by the dative.

*Note that *arm* and *reich* usually precede a phrase with *an*, even if it has a noun, e.g. *Das Land ist arm/reich an Bodenschätzen.*

(b) *über* is used with many adjectives to mean 'about'

In this usage it is always followed by the accusative, e.g.:

Sie war erfreut, erstaunt, froh, verwundert **über seinen Erfolg**

Frequent adjectives which govern *über* (see also **18.3.12e**):

aufgebracht *outraged*	erfreut *delighted*
beschämt *ashamed*	erstaunt *amazed*
bestürzt, betroffen *full of consternation*	froh *glad* (see **6.3.3a**)
empört, entrüstet *indignant*	glücklich *happy*
entzückt *delighted*	traurig *sad*
erbittert *bitter*	verwundert *astonished*
erbost *infuriated*	

(c) Many adjectives governing prepositions can be used with a following *dass*-clause or an infinitive clause with *zu*

These clauses are often anticipated by the prepositional adverb (*da* (*r*) + preposition), e.g. *daran*, *damit*, see **3.5**:

Er ist **davon** abhängig, dass ihm sein Bruder hilft	*He is dependent on his brother helping him*
Er ist **davon** abhängig, das Geld zu erhalten	He is dependent on receiving the money
Wir sind **dazu** bereit, Ihnen darüber Auskünfte zu geben	We are prepared to give you some information about this
Sie war **darüber** froh, dass sie ihn noch sehen würde	*She was pleased that she would still see him*

There are no hard and fast rules for when the prepositional adverb is used in these constructions and when it is not. With a number of the adjectives given in section **6.4.1** it is quite optional and pairs of sentences like the following are equally acceptable and grammatical:

Ich bin gewöhnt, jeden Tag eine Stunde zu üben

Ich bin daran gewöhnt, jeden Tag eine Stunde zu üben

Using the prepositional adverb seems to focus emphasis on the content of the dependent clause or infinitive phrase. In practice it is more commonly used than left out, even where it is optional, especially in written German.

6.5 Comparison of adjectives

Qualities can be compared using special forms of adjectives (and adverbs, see **7.7**). These are called the COMPARATIVE and SUPERLATIVE forms. Thus, for the adjective *groß*:

positive degree:	Mein Haus ist **groß**	*My house is big*
comparative degree:	Dein Haus ist **größer**	Your house is bigger
superlative degree:	Ihr Haus ist **das größte**	*Her house is the biggest*

The **comparative** is normally used to compare two items, the **superlative** more than two:

der **größere** der beiden Brüder

Von den zwei Büchern über Berlin hat er das **billigere** gekauft

der **größte** von acht Jungen

Von diesen vielen Büchern hat er das **billigste** gekauft

As in English, this rule is not universally observed in everyday speech, and phrasings like *der größte der beiden Brüder* are often heard, although they are considered incorrect.

This section deals with the formation and use of the comparative and superlative degree of adjectives, and other means of comparison in German:

- the **formation** of comparatives and superlatives (section **6.5.1**)
- the **uses** of the **comparative** and other means of comparison (section **6.5.2**)
- the **uses** of the **superlative** (section **6.5.3**)

6.5.1 Formation of the comparative and superlative

(a) The comparative and superlative are formed by means of the endings *-er* and *-st*

These are the regular endings and they are simply added to the positive form, as shown for some common adjectives in **Table 6.7**. As the superlative always occurs in a declined form, with the definite article, *das* is included with all examples. Exceptions to this regular pattern are detailed in sections **(b)** to **(h)** below.

Table 6.7 Regular formation of comparative and superlative

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
tief *deep*	tief **er**	(das) tief **st** e

schön *beautiful* langsam *slow* freundlich *friendly, kind* unwiderstehlich *irresistible*	schön **er** langsam **er** freundlich **er** unwiderstehlich **er**	(das) schön **st** e (das) langsam **st** e (das) freundlich **st** e (das) unwiderstehlich **st** e

In English we form comparatives and superlatives in two ways. With short adjectives, we use the endings *-er* and - *est*, with longer adjectives we use 'more' and 'most'. In German, the endings *-er* and *-st* are used **no matter how long the adjective is**; *mehr* and *meist* are not normally used in comparatives and superlatives, except in the few special cases explained in **6.5.1h**.

Comparative and superlative forms decline in the same way as any adjective when used before a noun, with the same weak or strong endings (see **6.1**), e.g.:

ein schneller **er** Zug, der schnellst **e** Zug, in der tiefst **en** Schlucht der Erde

(b) Some common adjectives have quite irregular comparative and superlative forms

groß	gr **ö ß er**	das gr **ößt** e	*big, large*
gut	**besser**	das **beste**	good
hoch	h **öher**	das h **ö** ch **st** e	high
nah	n **äher**	das n **ächst** e	*near*

(c) Comparative and superlative forms with *Umlaut*

A few mostly very common adjectives have *Umlaut* on the root vowel in the comparative and superlative, in addition to the ending:

arm – **ä** rmer – der **ä** rmste klug – kl **ü** ger – der kl **ü** gste lang – l **ä** nger – der l **ä** ngste

(i) The following adjectives **always have *Umlaut*** in the comparative and superlative

alt *old*	hart *hard*	kurz *short*	schwarz *black*
arg *bad*	jung *young*	lang *long*	stark *strong*
arm *poor*	kalt *cold*	rot *red*	warm *warm*
dumm *stupid*	klug *clever*	scharf *sharp*	
grob *coarse*	krank *sick*	schwach *weak*	

groß, hoch and *nah* also have *Umlaut* in the comparative and superlative, but they are otherwise irregular, see **(b)** above.

(ii) A few adjectives have **alternative forms with** or **without *Umlaut***

e.g. *nass – nässer/nasser – der nässeste/nassest e.* These are:

bang *scared*	gesund *healthy*	krumm *crooked*	zart *tender*
blass *pale*	glatt *smooth*	nass *wet*	
fromm *pious*	karg *sparse*	schmal *narrow*	

In general, the forms without *Umlaut* are more frequent in writing, whereas those with *Umlaut* are more typical of spoken German, especially in the South.

(d) Some adjectives add *-est* rather than *-st* in the superlative

In general, the vowel - *e* - can be understood as an aid to pronunciation.

(i) Those whose stem ends in - ***haft***, - ***s***, - ***sk***, - ***ß***, - ***x*** and - ***z*** always have - *est*

boshaft – der boshaft **est** e	süß – der süß **est** e
lieblos – der lieblos **est** e	fix – der fix **est** e
brüsk – der brüsk **est** e	stolz – der stolz **est** e

(ii) Those with a **stem** ending in - ***d***, - ***t*** and - *sc* ***h*** usually add -

est

mild – der mild **est** e berühmt – der berühmt **est** e
sanft – der sanft **est** e rasch – der rasch **est** e

However, longer words in these consonants have the ending - *st* **if the last syllable is unstressed**:

spannend – der spannend **ste** komisch – der komisch **ste**

(iii) Those with a stem ending in a **long vowel** or **diphthong** can have the ending - ***est*** or - ***st***

früh – der früh **st** e/früh **est** e treu – der treu **st** e/treu **est** e

In practice, the ending *-est* is more frequent.

(iv) Other words whose root ends in a **consonant cluster** may have *-est*, e.g. *der schlankeste*, *der stumpfeste*, although the shorter ending - *st* is **more usual**, e.g. *der schlankste*, *der stumpfste*.

(e) Adjectives in - *el*, - *en*, - *er*

These can drop the - *e*- of the stem in the comparative, e.g.:

dunkel – **dunkler** – das dunkelste bitter – **bitt(e)rer** – das bitterste
trocken – **trock(e)ner** – das trockenste teuer – **teurer** – das teuerste

(i) Those in - ***el*** regularly drop the - *e*- of the stem

dunkel – dunk **ler** edel – ed **ler**

(ii) Those in - ***en*** and - ***er*** usually drop the - *e*- of the stem if they have an inflectional ending

trocken – der trock **nere** Wein bitter – ein bitt **rerer** Geruch

If there is no ending, the - *e-* is usually kept in writing, although it is often dropped in speech:

Dieser Wein ist trock **ener** Dieser Geruch war bitt **erer**

The - *e-* is always dropped in the comparative of adjectives in - *er* if *-er* follows a diphthong:

teuer – Diese Tasche ist teu **rer** – die teu **rere** Tasche

(f) The comparative and superlative of compound adjectives

Compound adjectives are normally treated as single words and form their comparative and superlative in the usual way. This is always the case with those written as a single word:

altmodisch *old-fashioned*	altmodisch **er**	das altmodisch **st** e
schwerwiegend *serious, weighty*	schwerwiegend **er**	das schwerwiegend **st** e
vielsagend *meaningful*	vielsagend **er**	das vielsagend **st** e
vielversprechend *promising*	vielversprechend **er**	das vielversprechend **st** e

However, if both parts are felt to retain their original meaning, they are written as separate words and only the first has the comparative or superlative form. The superlative has the form ***am*** *... - ten.*

die dicht bevölkerte Stadt *the densely populated city*
die **dichter bevölkerte** Stadt
die **am dichtesten bevölkerte** Stadt
die leicht verdauliche Speise *the easily digested food*
die **leichter verdauliche** Speise
die **am leichtesten verdauliche** Speise

A few frequent idiomatic combinations have **superlative** forms which

are written as single words:

der hoch gelegene Ort *the place situated high up*
ein **höher gelegen** er Ort
der **höchstgelegen** e Ort
nahe liegende Gründe *obvious reasons*
näher liegend e Gründe
nächstliegend e Gründe
die weit gehende Übereinstimmung *the far-reaching agreement*
die **weiter gehende** Übereinstimmung
die **weitestgehende** Übereinstimmung

Compound comparative forms of such adjectives with the suffixes *-er* or *-st* added to the second part (*weitgehender, das weitgehendste*) are not uncommon, and in practice there is much variation in usage with such forms and considerable uncertainty about which may be considered correct. A few frequent words have alternative forms, in particular *schwerwiegend*, for which *schwerer wiegend* and *schwerstwiegend* are found as well as those given above.

(g) Seven adjectives denoting position only have comparative and/or superlative forms

das äußere *outer, external*	das äußerste *outermost, utmost*
das innere *inner, internal*	das innerste *innermost*
das obere *upper*	das oberste *uppermost*
das untere *lower*	das unterste *lowest, bottom*
das vordere *front*	das vorderste *foremost, front*
das hintere *back*	das hinterste *back(most)*
das mittlere *central, middle; medium*	das mittelste *central, middle*

These adjectives are only used attributively, i.e. before a noun:

seine **äußere** Erscheinung	seine **innersten** Gedanken
mit der **äußersten** Höflichkeit	in der **vorderen**, **vordersten** Reihe

As equivalents for English 'external(ly)' and 'internal(ly)' in other contexts, i.e. after *sein* or as adverbs, German uses *äußerlich* and *innerlich*:

Seine Verletzungen sind nicht **äußerlich**, sondern **innerlich**
Sie blieb **äußerlich** / **innerlich** ganz ruhig

(h) The use of *mehr* and *meist* in comparison

A few adjectives form their comparative and superlative by means of a preceding *mehr* or *am meisten*. This is restricted to

(i) participles which are not normally used as adjectives:

Er verrichtet jetzt eine ihm **mehr zusagend** e Tätigkeit	*He is now performing a job which appeals to him more*
Dresden ist die durch den Krieg **am meisten zerstört** e deutsche Stadt	*Dresden is the German city most completely destroyed in the war*

(ii) a few adjectives which are only used in the predicate (like *zuwider*, see **6.3.1b**):

Er ist mir noch **mehr zuwider** als sein Bruder	*He is even more repugnant to me than his brother*

(iii) some unusually long and complex adjectives like *bemitleidenswert*:

Er ist der **am meisten bemitleidenswert** e Kranke	*He is the most to be pitied of all the patients*

With past participles a prefixed *meist* - can be used rather than *am meisten*, e.g. *die* **meistzerstörte** Stadt, der **meistgekaufte** Geschirrspülautomat Deutschlands.

mehr is also used if two qualities of the same object are being compared, i.e. in the sense 'rather': *Diese Arbeit ist* ***mehr*** *langweilig als*

schwierig. *eher* is an alternative to *mehr* in this meaning in more formal registers.

6.5.2 The use of the comparative and other types of comparison

(a) The comparative particle in standard usage is *als*

This corresponds to English *than*:

Peter ist älter **als** Thomas	Mein Wagen ist schneller **als** deiner

(i) *wie* (or *als wie*) is very frequently used rather than *als* in (especially regional) colloquial speech.

e.g. *Peter ist älter* **(als) wie** Thomas; *Mein Wagen ist schneller (als) wie deiner*. This usage is generally considered incorrect in standard German.

(ii) The use of *denn* rather than *als* is archaic, although it can be used in formal registers to avoid the sequence *als als*:

Die Mauer erscheint eher als Kunstwerk **denn als** Grenze (*Schneider*)	*The wall appears rather as a work of art than as a frontier*

denn occurs in a few set phrases, especially *mehr denn je* 'more than ever'.

(iii) Noun phrases after *als* are in apposition to the noun they refer to, i.e. they are normally in the same case, see **2.6**.

(b) Degree of difference

i.e. a certain amount more. This is expressed by *um … als*, or by a noun

phrase in the accusative case:

Eine Fahrt im TGV-Atlantique kann **um** bis zu 50 Prozent teurer kommen **als** in einem herkömmlichen Schnellzug (*FR*)	*A journey on the TGV-Atlantique can work out up to 50% more expensive than in an ordinary express train*
Er ist (**um**) **einen Monat** jünger **als** ich	*He is a month younger than me*

(c) To express a greater degree *noch* is used with the comparative

i.e. the equivalent of English 'even more':

London ist eine **noch schmutzigere** Stadt als Amsterdam	*London is an even dirtier city than Amsterdam*
Oliver ist noch fauler als dein Bruder	*Oliver is even lazier than your brother*

(d) Lower degrees of comparison are expressed by *weniger, am wenigsten*

These correspond to English 'less tall than', 'least tall', etc.:

Er war **weniger optimistisch** als deine Tante	*He was less optimistic than your aunt*
der **am wenigsten talentiert** e Spieler	*the least talented player*

In practice, *am wenigsten* is felt to be awkward, and other constructions are often preferred. Compare:

die **uninteressantest** e Rede	*the least interesting speech*
der **billigst** e/ **preiswertest** e Wagen	the least expensive car
die **einfachst** e Methode	the least difficult method
	the least possible expenditure

möglichst gering e Kosten

In formal registers, *minder* is an occasional alternative to *weniger*, e.g. *Nicht minder virtuos ist dagegen die Vorstellung auf der gegenüberliegenden Reeperbahnseite* (*HMP*).

(e) The 'absolute' comparative

The comparative of some common adjectives is used not to signal a direct comparison, but to indicate a fair degree of the relevant quality, e.g. *ein* **älterer** Herr 'an elderly gentleman', *eine* **größere** Stadt 'a fair-sized town'. This so-called 'absolute' comparative is possible with the following adjectives:

alt	dick	dünn	gut	jung	kurz	neu
bekannt	dunkel	groß	hell	klein	lang	

eine **bessere** Wohngegend	*a fairly good neighbourhood*
seit **längerer** Zeit	for a longish time now
ein **neueres** Modell	*a fairly new model*

(f) Progression is expressed by using *immer* with the comparative

This corresponds to English 'more and more':

Der Sprit wird **immer teurer**	*Petrol is getting dearer and dearer*
Meine Arbeit wird **immer schwieriger**	*My work is getting more and more difficult*

(g) Proportion (i.e. 'the more … the more')

Proportion is expressed in German by using a subordinate clause introduced by the conjunction *je*, followed by a main clause beginning with *umso* or (especially in formal registers) *desto*:

Je älter er wird, **desto/umso** ärgerlicher wird er	*The older he gets, the more irritating he becomes*
je schneller der Wagen, **desto/umso** größer die Risiken	the faster the car, the greater the risks
Je besser das Wetter, **desto/umso** mehr können wir wandern	*The better the weather, the more we can go hiking*

(i) In older German, a second *je* could be used rather than *desto* or *umso*. This survives in a few set phrases such as *je länger, je lieber* and *je länger, je mehr*.
(ii) As an equivalent to 'all the more because', German uses *umso mehr*, *als/da/weil* … (see **17.4.3b**).
(iii) In colloquial German the combination *umso … umso* is common, e.g. *umso größer, umso besser* 'the bigger, the better'.

(h) Equality is expressed by *so … wie*

This is the equivalent construction to English 'as … as':

Peter ist **so** alt **wie** Thomas	Er ist nur halb **so** alt **wie** seine Schwester

(i) In colloquial German, *als* is occasionally used for *wie*:

Peter ist **so** alt **als** Thomas	Ich bin doch **so** groß **als** du

This is only regarded as acceptable in written registers in a few contexts:

- 'as well as' can be *sowohl wie* or *sowohl als* (see **17.1.4b**), e.g. *Ich will* **sowohl Anna als/wie (auch)** Helga einladen
- 'as soon/little as possible' can be *so bald/wenig wie möglich* or *so bald/wenig als möglich*.
- 'twice as … as' can be *doppelt so … wie* or *doppelt so … als*: *Die Ernte ist* **doppelt so groß als/ wie** im vorigen Jahr

The combination *als wie*, e.g. *Ich bin doch so groß* **als wie** du is

common in speech, but it is universally considered to be a non-standard regionalism.

(ii) *so* can be omitted in some common phrases and idioms

Er ist (so) hart wie Stahl Er ist (so) schlau wie ein Fuchs

(iii) 'just as ... (as)' is expressed by *ebenso* ... (*wie*) or *genauso* ... (*wie*):

Peter ist **ebenso** / **genauso** alt **wie** Thomas

Dort können wir **genauso** gutes Fleisch kaufen

(iv) *ebenso* is also used to indicate equivalence between two qualities:

Er ist **ebenso** fleißig wie geschickt *He is (just) as industrious as he is skillful*

(v) *nicht so sehr ... wie* is used for 'not so much ... as':

Er ist **nicht so sehr** dumm **wie** faul *He is not so much stupid as lazy*

(i) *gleich* can indicate equality with an adjective

Peter und Thomas sind **gleich** alt *Peter and Thomas are the same age*
Diese Städte sind etwa **gleich** groß *These towns are about the same size*

6.5.3 Types and uses of the superlative

(a) The superlative form *am ... sten*

The form of the superlative with the preposition ***am*** and the weak

adjective ending - ***en***, e.g. *schnell* – ***am*** *schnell* ***sten***) is used primarily for adverbs, see **7.7.1a**. However, it can be used adjectivally in the predicate of the verb ***sein*** beside the usual form of the superlative with a definite article, e.g.:

Welcher Junge ist **am stärksten** ? ~ *Welcher Junge ist* **der stärkste** ?

(i) If a noun is understood, either form can be used:

Diese Blume ist **die schönste/ am schönsten**	*This flower is the most beautiful*
Unter den deutschen Flüssen ist die Donau **der längste/am längsten**	*Of the German rivers the Danube is the longest*

(ii) If there is no noun to be understood, or if something is being compared with itself (= 'at its most …'), **only the form with *am*** can be used:

Ein Mercedes wäre **am teuersten**	*A Mercedes would be the dearest*
Für meinen Geschmack ist eine Nelke schöner als eine Tulpe, aber eine Rose ist natürlich **am schönsten**	For my taste a carnation is nicer than a tulip, but a rose is the nicest
Hier ist die Donau **am tiefsten**	The Danube is (at its) deepest here
Der Garten ist **am schönsten** im Juni	*The garden is (at its) nicest in June*

(b) Any superlative can be used in an absolute sense

i.e. not as a comparison but in the sense 'extremely':

in **höchster** Erregung	*in great excitement*
mit **größter** Mühe	with the greatest difficulty
Es ist **höchste** Zeit, dass …	It is high time that …
Es herrschte das **rauheste** Wetter	The weather was extremely raw

Modernste Kureinrichtungen stehen zu Ihrer Verfügung (*FAZ*)	*You will have use of the most up-to-date spa treatments*

(c) A superlative adjective can be emphasized by prefixing *aller-*

This has the sense of the highest degree possible, e.g.:

der **allerschnellste** Wagen	*the fastest car of all*
die **allerbeste** Lösung	the absolutely best solution
Zugleich ist jetzt wieder der Moment gekommen für eine der **allerbritischsten** aller britischen Sportarten: Snooker (*NZZ*)	*At the same time the moment has now arrived again for what is surely one of the most British of British sports: snooker*

Adverbs

The traditional term ADVERB covers a range of words with a variety of uses. Typically, adverbs are words which **do not decline** and which express relations like **time**, **place** and **manner**. They can be used:

> to qualify verbs: *Sie hat ihm* **höflich** geantwortet
> to qualify adjectives: *ein* **natürlich** eleganter Stil
> in relation to the sentence as a whole, e.g. *Er hat ihr* ***sicher*** *geholfen*

There is considerable disagreement about which words should be considered as adverbs in German and how they are best classified. In this chapter we use a simplified classification for practical purposes, and this is summarized in **Table 7.1**.

Table 7.1 Main types of adverb

Adverbs	Use	Examples
time	*answering the question*	damals, lange, oft,
place	***when***	gestern, heute
direction	*answering the question*	hier, dort, oben,
attitude/viewpoint	***where***	draußen, überall
reason/cause	*answering the question*	dahin, daher, hinüber,
manner	***where to/from***	herein
degree	*commenting on what is*	hoffentlich, leider,
interrogative	*said, or answering a*	wahrscheinlich,
	yes/no *question*	natürlich, psychologisch
	answering the question	dadurch, daher,
	why	deshalb, folglich,
	answering the question	trotzdem

	how *answering the question* ***how much/small*** *(often with adjectives)* *used to ask* ***questions***	irgendwie, anders, telefonisch sehr, außerordentlich, relativ, etwas, ziemlich wann?, weshalb?, wieso?

Phrases, often with a preposition, can have the same function as an adverb in a sentence. Compare:

Sie hat **heute** gearbeitet – Sie hat **den ganzen Tag** gearbeitet

Sie ist **trotzdem** gekommen – Sie ist **trotz des Regens** gekommen

Sie blieb **dort** – Sie blieb **in der alten Stadt am Rhein**

The term ADVERBIAL is used to refer both to single words and to phrases like the above (traditionally called **adverbial phrases**) which have the same function in a sentence. This chapter only deals with adverbs proper (i.e. single words) and concentrates on those adverbs of German and their uses which present significant differences to their most usual English equivalents:

- adverbs of **place** (section 7.1)
- adverbs of **direction** (section 7.2)
- adverbs of **time** (section 7.3)
- adverbs of **manner**, **viewpoint**, **attitude** and **reason** (section 7.4)
- adverbs of **degree** (section 7.5)
- interrogative **adverbs** (section 7.6)
- **comparative** and **superlative** forms of adverbs (section 7.7)

7.1 Adverbs of place

7.1.1 *hier, dort, da*

(a) *hier* refers to a place close to the speaker (= English 'here')

Ich habe deine Tasche **hier** im Schrank gefunden

(b) *dort* refers to a place away from the speaker (= English 'there')

Ich sah deine Schwester **dort** an der Ecke stehen

(c) *da* is a less emphatic alternative to *dort*

It is used more frequently than *dort* and usually refers to a place away from the speaker:

Ich sah ihn **da** an der Ecke stehen

da is sometimes used to point in a general, unemphatic way in contexts where the difference between 'here' and 'there' is not important. In contexts like these it can sometimes correspond to English 'here':

Herr Meyer ist momentan nicht **da** *Mr Meyer is not here at the moment*

This usage is particularly common in the South, and universal in Austria.

7.1.2 *oben, unten*

German lacks noun equivalents for 'top'and 'bottom'and often uses phrases with *oben* and *unten* in contexts where these nouns would be used in English:

oben auf dem Turm	*at the top of the tower*
Sie stand ganz **oben** auf der Treppe	She was standing right at the top of

unten auf dem Bild	the stairs
Bis unten sind es noch zwei Stunden zu Fuß	at the bottom of the picture It's another two hours' walk to the bottom
Die Säule wird **nach unten hin** breiter	The column broadens out towards the bottom
Sein Name steht **unten** auf der Liste	His name is at the bottom of the list
ganz **unten** im Kasten	right at the bottom of the chest
auf Seite 90 **unten**	at the bottom of page 90
von **oben** bis **unten**	*from top to bottom*

7.1.3 *mitten*

The adverb *mitten* is the most usual equivalent for the English nouns 'middle' or 'midst'. It is usually followed by a preposition. In some contexts *mitten* can have other English equivalents:

Mitten im Garten ist ein Teich	*In the middle of the garden there is a pond*
Sie stellte die Vase **mitten** auf den Tisch	She put the vase in the middle of the table
mitten in der Nacht	in the middle of the night
mitten in der ganzen Aufregung	in the midst of all the excitement
Ich war **mitten** unter den Leuten auf der Straße	I was in the midst of the people in the street
Er bahnte sich einen Weg **mitten** durch die Menge	He forced his way through the middle of the crowd
mitten auf der Leiter	*halfway up/down the ladder*

7.1.4 *außen, draußen; innen, drinnen*

außen and *innen* mean '**on** the outside', '**on** the inside', i.e. they refer to the outer or inner surface of the object, whereas *draußen* and *drinnen* mean 'outside' and 'inside', i.e. away from the object or contained within it:

Die Tasse ist **außen** schmutzig	*The cup is dirty on the outside*
Ich musste **draußen** warten	I had to wait outside
Die Äpfel sind **innen** faul	The apples are rotten inside
Drinnen ist es aber schön warm	Indoors it's nice and warm, though
Dieses Fenster geht **nach innen** auf	This window opens inwards
Wir kommen **von draußen**	We are coming from outside
Er schloss die Tür **von außen** zu	He shut the door from the outside
von außen / **innen** gesehen	*seen from the outside/inside*

The use of *außen* and *innen* to mean 'outside' and 'inside' is now archaic or regional (especially Austrian).

7.1.5 *Indefinite place adverbs*

i.e. the equivalents of English 'somewhere', 'anywhere', 'everywhere', 'nowhere' and similar words and phrases.

(a) *irgendwo*

irgendwo corresponds to 'somewhere' or, in questions, 'anywhere':

Ich habe es wohl **irgendwo** liegen gelassen	*I've probably left it somewhere*
Hast du Paula **irgendwo** gesehen?	*Have you seen Paula anywhere?*

In spoken German simple *wo* is often used for *irgendwo* if unstressed: *Ich habe es wohl **wo** liegen gelassen.*

(b) *überall*

überal l corresponds to 'everywhere', or to 'anywhere' in the sense of 'no matter where':

Erika hat dich **überall** gesucht	*Erika was looking for you*
Sie dürfen hier **überall** parken	*everywhere*

(c) *nirgendwo, nirgends*

nirgendw o and *nirgends* correspond to 'nowhere', 'not … anywhere':

Er war **nirgendwo** / **nirgends** zu sehen	*He was nowhere to be seen*
Ich habe dich gestern **nirgends** gesehen	*I didn't see you anywhere yesterday*

(d) *anderswo, woanders*

andersw o and *woanders* correspond to 'somewhere else', 'elsewhere', or, in questions, 'anywhere else':

Sie müssen ihn **anderswo** / **woanders** suchen	*You'll have to look for him somewhere else*
Hast du ihn **anderswo** / **woanders** gesehen?	*Have you seen him somewhere/ anywhere else?*

7.2 Adverbs of direction: *hin* and *her*

The adverbs *hin* and *her* indicate the direction of movement, most typically towards or away from the speaker, and German expresses this more consistently and more systematically than English. These adverbs have a wide range of uses and can occur alone or linked with another word, especially a preposition. In general, *hin* denotes **motion away from** the speaker (or the person concerned), while *her* denotes **motion towards** the speaker (or another point of reference).

7.2.1 *hin* and *her* compounded with adverbs of place

Direction adverbs are formed in German by compounding ***hin*** or ***her*** with adverbs indicating place, and these are used to differentiate consistently between **position**, **movement away from the speaker** and **movement towards the speaker**. This can be illustrated by the interrogative adverbs:

Wo wohnen Sie?	*Where do you live?*
Wohin gehen Sie?	Where are you going (to)?
Woher kommen Sie?	*Where are you coming from?*

In English we don't need to say 'Where are you going **to** ?' since 'to' can be left out. In German, though, we have to use *wo **hin** ?* to ask where someone is going or something is being put.

The other adverbs of place listed in section **7.1** can be compounded like this with - *hin* and - *her* to indicate direction to/from:

Sie wohnt **hier**	*She lives here*
Sie kommt **hierher**	She's coming here
Leg das Paket **hierhin** !	Put the parcel down here
Sie wohnt doch **da** / **dort**	She lives there, doesn't she?
In den Ferien fahren wir **dorthin** / **dahin**, wo wir voriges Jahr waren	In the holidays we're going where we were last year
Sie kommt **dorther**	That's where she comes from
Er stand **dort** an der Ecke	He was standing there on the corner
Wie wollen wir **dorthin** kommen?	How are we going to get there?
Er geht heute Nachmittag **irgendwohin**	He's going somewhere this afternoon
Sie geht **überallhin**	She goes everywhere
Morgen fahren wir **anderswohin**	*We're going somewhere else tomorrow*

wohin, *woher*, *dahin* and *daher* are often split, especially in spoken German, with *hin* and *her* being placed at the end of the clause (when they are written together with the verb, like a separable prefix):

Wo kommt deine Mutter **her** ?	**Wo** gehört dieses Buch **hin** ?

Da gehe ich praktisch nie **hin** ein kleines, gutes Restaurant, **wo** keine Amerikaner **hin** kamen (*Baum*)	**Da** kommt er doch nicht **her**, oder?

(i) *von wo* and *von da/dort* are common alternatives in spoken German to *woher*, *daher/dorther*:

Von wo kommt er? Er kommt ***von da/dort***.

(ii) *dahin* is used with *sein* in the meaning 'finished', 'lost', e.g.:

Sein Leben ist ***dahin***

Mein ganzes Geld war ***dahin***.

(iii) If these words are not being used literally they cannot be split, e.g. *woher* in: ***Woher*** *weißt du das?* 'How do you know that?' and *daher* in the meaning 'that is why', e.g. ***Daher*** *hat sie sich aufgeregt.*

7.2.2 *hin* and *her* as verb prefixes

hin and *her* can be used with many verbs as separable prefixes (see **20.6**).

(a) Used as prefixes, *hin* and *her* often indicate the direction of movement

In such contexts no specific word meaning 'here' or 'there' is needed, and the English equivalent can be idiomatic, especially if the verb itself does not primarily express movement:

Heute ist eine Wahlversammlung, und ich gehe **hin**	*There's an election meeting today and I'm going there/to it*

Ich hielt ihm die Zeitung **hin**	I held out the newspaper to him
Ich hörte einen Ruf und sah **hin**	I heard a cry and looked over in that direction
Komm mal **her** !	Come here!
Gib den Schlüssel **her** !	Give me the key
Er hat mich mit dem Auto **her** gefahren	He drove me here
Halt den Teller **her** !	Hold out your plate
Setz dich **her** zu mir!	*Come and sit down over here by me*

(b) Some verbs with the prefixes *hin-* and *her-* have a derived, abstract or figurative meaning

sein Leben für etwas **hingeben**	*to sacrifice one's life for sth.*
Das wird schon **hinhauen** (*coll.*)	It'll be OK in the end
Nach dem Interview **war** ich völlig **hin**	After the interview I was shattered
Die Burschen **fielen** über ihn **her**	The youths attacked him
Das Thema **gibt** doch nicht viel **her**	There's not a lot to this topic, is there?
Es **ging** recht lustig **her**	It was good fun
Sie hat ein Zimmer für ihn **hergerichtet**	She got a room ready for him
Mit der Qualität der Abiturienten **ist** es nicht mehr weit **her** (*Spiegel*)	*The quality of school-leavers isn't up to much any more*

7.2.3 *hin* and *her* with a preceding prepositional phrase

(a) When used with a preceding prepositional phrase *hin* and *her* emphasize direction

In contexts like this they are typically optional:

Wir wanderten bis zu den Bergen (**hin**)	Er blickte zur Decke (**hin**)
Wir fuhren nach Süden (**hin**)	Er ging zum Fenster (**hin**)
	Sie flogen über den Berg (**hin**)

Wir wanderten durch das Tal (**hin**) Rings um ihn (**her**) tobte der Sturm
Eine Stimme kam von oben (**her**)

(b) *her* with *hinter, neben, vor* and *zwischen*

With these prepositions, *her* indicates movement in relation to another person or thing moving in the same direction. The noun is always in the dative case, see **18.3**:

Er ging **hinter** ihr **her**	*He was walking behind her*
Der Hund lief **neben** mir **her**	The dog was running beside me
Ein deutscher Wagen fuhr **vor** ihm **her**	A German car was driving in front of him
Sie ging **zwischen** uns **her**	*She was walking between us*

The adverbs *hinterher* and *nebenher* are used in a similar sense, e.g. *Er lief hinterher, nebenher* 'He was running behind, alongside'.

(c) Phrases with *auf* giving reasons or causes can be strengthened by *hin*

See also **18.3.5e**:

Das tat er **auf** meinen Vorschlag **hin**	*He did that at my suggestion*
auf die Gefahr **hin**, erkannt zu werden	*at the risk of being recognized*

7.2.4 *hin-* and *her-* with prepositions form directional adverbs

e.g. ***hinab***, ***herab***, ***hinauf***, ***herbei***, etc. These are mainly used as separable verb prefixes, see **20.6**. In general they link the direction indicated by the preposition with the notion **away from** or **towards** the

speaker. However, in everyday speech, especially in North Germany, both *hin-* and *her -* are often reduced to *r-* in these compounds irrespective of the direction involved, e.g.:

Wollen wir jetzt **raus** gehen (written: *hinausgehen*)

Wollen wir die Jalousien **runter** lassen? (written: *herunterlassen*)

These forms are quite often used in writing to give the impression of informal colloquial speech, e.g. *Ich ging morgens Bahnhofstreppen **rauf** und **runter** und nachmittags Bahnhofstreppen **runter** und **rauf*** (*Böll*).

(a) Six prepositions indicating direction form pairs of compounds with *hin-* and *her-*

hinab, herab *down*	hinein, herein *in*
hinauf, herauf *up*	hinüber, herüber *over*
hinaus, heraus *out*	hinunter, herunter *down*

They are characteristically used in conjunction with a preceding prepositional phrase or a noun phrase in the accusative case (see **2.2.2b**):

Wir stiegen die Treppe ***hinauf*** Wir kamen die Treppe **herab** / ***herunter*** Er ging in das Haus hinein Er kam in das Zimmer **herein**	*We climbed up the stairs We came down the stairs He went into the house He came into the room*

hinab / **herab** and ***hinunter*** / ***herunter*** have identical meanings. Those with - *unter* are more usual in spoken registers.

hinaus and ***heraus*** are used with a preceding phrase with ***zu*** to indicate movement or vision out of or through doors, windows etc., e.g.:

Er blickte **zur** Tür **hinaus**	*He looked out (of) the door*

Sie warf es **zum** Fenster **heraus** *She threw it out (of) the window*

(b) Other prepositions or adverbs combine with only one of *hin-* or *her-*

With **hin** -:
hindurch *through*
With **her** -:
heran *along*; *up (to)*

hinweg *away*
herbei *along*

hinzu *in addition*
hervor *forth, out*
herum *round*

Er drang durch die Menge **hindurch**	*He pushed through the crowd*
Die Rollbahn sauste unter uns **hinweg**	The runway sped away beneath us
Sie legte einige Papiere **hinzu**	She put down some papers in addition
Sie trat an den Tisch **heran**	She stepped up to the table
Einige Polizisten kamen **herbei**	A few policemen came along
Er kam um die Ecke **herum**	He came round the corner
Die Bücher lagen auf dem Tisch **herum**	The books were lying around on the table
Er zog einen Revolver unter dem Tisch **hervor**	*He pulled a revolver out from under the table*

German used to make a distinction between ***herum*** 'round in a circle' and ***umher*** 'criss-crossing; higgledy-piggledy'. Nowadays, though, *herum* is commonly used in both senses in both speech and writing.

(c) The adverb with *hin-* or *her-* often repeats the direction given by a previous preposition

Der Vogel flog **in** das Zimmer **hinein**
Wir kamen **aus** dem Wald **heraus**
Er kam **um** die Ecke **herum**
Sie gingen **durch** das Tal **hindurch**

These constructions can seem tautologous, but if the adverb is omitted, the effect is usually that the verb is emphasized rather than the direction. The adverb should thus be used **unless** the verb is to be stressed. Compare:

Der Vogel ist in das Zimmer **geflogen** (i.e. it flew rather than hopped)

Der Vogel ist in das Zimmer **hinein** geflogen (i.e. it didn't fly **out**)

Wir wollen die Truhe in dein Zimmer **tragen** (i.e. carry, not push)

Wir wollen die Truhe in dein Zimmer **hinüber** tragen (i.e. take it **across** – not up or down)

If another word in the sentence bears the main stress, the adverb is optional:

Der **Vogel** ist in das Zimmer (hinein)geflogen

Wir wollen die **Truhe** in dein Zimmer (hinüber)tragen

(d) Some verbs with *hin-* and *her-* compounds have figurative meanings

sich zu etwas **herablassen**	*to condescend to (do) sth.*
Er **gibt** eine Zeitschrift **heraus**	He edits a journal
Es **kommt** auf dasselbe **heraus**	It all comes to the same thing
Er **leierte** die Predigt **herunter**	He reeled off the sermon
Die Verhandlungen **zogen sich hinaus**	*The negotiations dragged on*

(e) Verbs with simple direction prefixes

ab -, ***an*** -, ***auf*** -, ***aus*** - etc. Because direction is indicated by using the compounds with *hin-* or *her-* verbs with simple prefixes usually have a derived, extended or other non-literal meaning (see also **20.6.1**).

Compare:

Er ist (in das Zimmer) **hineingegangen**	*He went in(to the room)*
Die Zeitung ist **eingegangen**	The newspaper went bust
Er hat den Koffer **hereingebracht**	He brought the suitcase in
Das **bringt** nichts **ein**	That's not worth it
Er **kam** (aus dem Haus) **heraus**	He came out (of the house)
Mit 100 Euro **kommen** wir nicht **aus**	We won't manage on 100 euros
Ich **ging** zu ihm **hinüber**	I went over to him
Er ist zur SPD **übergegangen**	*He went over to the SPD*

7.2.5 Other meanings and uses of *hin* and *her*

(i) ***hin*** - often has the sense 'down':

Sie legte sich **hin** — Der Junge fiel **hin** — Er setzte den Stuhl **hin**

(ii) ***vor sich hin*** means 'to oneself' (see **18.3.16b**):

Das murmelte er so **vor sich hin** — Sie las **vor sich hin**

(iii) The combination ***an*.. . *hin*** (see **18.3.2a**) means 'alongside'. The noun is in the dative case:

Der Weg führt **an** der Wiese **hin** — *The path goes along the meadow*

(iv) ***von ... her*** means 'in respect of':

Das war schon verfehlt **von** der Zielsetzung **her** (see **18.2.8a**).

(v) ***hin und her*** means 'to and fro', 'back and forth':

Er ging auf der Straße **hin und her**

(vi) ***hin und wieder*** means 'now and again':

Hin und wieder sehe ich ihn in der Stadt

(vii) ***her*** is used in the sense of 'ago' in time phrases:

Das ist schon lange **her**

7.3 Adverbs of time

Adverbs of time can indicate a **point in time** (e.g. *damals*), **duration** (e.g. *lange*) or **frequency** (e.g. *oft*). A selection of commonly used German time adverbs is given in **7.3.1**, listed in terms of these categories. Sections **7.3.2** – **7.3.5** explain some instances where German and English usage differs in respect to time adverbs.

7.3.1 Commonly used adverbs of time

Further information on some of these adverbs is given in other sections, as indicated. Note that the 'present' with time adverbs can sometimes be a point of reference in the past or future rather than the actual present moment.

(a) indicating a point in time

(i) referring to the present:

augenblicklich	*at the moment*	jetzt	*now*
derzeit	at present	momentan	at present
gegenwärtig	at present,	nun (**9.1.24**)	now
gleichzeitig	currently	vorerst	for the moment

heuer (*S. Ger.*)	at the same	zugleich	at the same
heute	time	zurzeit	time
heutzutage	this year		*at present*
	today		
	nowadays		

(ii) referring to the past (or 'previously'):

früher	*formerly,*	soeben	*just (now)*
gerade	*previously*	unlängst	recently
gestern	just (now)	vorher	before(hand)
kürzlich	yesterday	vorhin	just now
neuerdings,	a short time ago	zuvor	*before(hand)*
neulich	*recently*		

(iii) referring to the future (or 'subsequently'):

augenblicklich	*at once*	gleich (**9.1.16**)	*at once*
bald	soon	morgen	tomorrow
danach	afterwards	nachher	after(wards)
darauf	after that	nächstens	shortly
daraufhin	after that	(**7.2.2c**)	at once,
demnächst	very soon	sofort, sogleich	immediately
einst	*some time* (also	später	later
	past)	vorher, zuvor	*before(hand)*

(b) indicating duration

bisher, bislang	*up to now,*	seither, seitdem	*since then*
inzwischen	*hitherto*	solange	meanwhile
künftig	meanwhile	unterdessen	in the meantime
kurz	in future	vorerst, vorläufig,	temporarily, for
lange	for a short time	vorübergehend	the time being,
längst (**7.2.2b**)	for a long time	währenddem	for the moment
mittlerweile	for a long time	(*inf.*),	meanwhile
momentan	in the meantime	währenddessen	*temporarily*
nunmehr (*elev.*)	for an instant	zeitweilig	

from now/then on

lang can be suffixed to other time words to indicate duration, e.g. *stundenlang*, *monatelang*, *jahrelang* 'for hours, months, years (on end)'.

(c) indicating frequency

gelegentlich	*occasionally*	nie und nimmer	*never ever*
häufig	frequently	nochmals	again
immer	always	oft, öfters	often
irgendwann	sometime (or	selten	seldom, rarely
je	other)	ständig	continually
jederzeit	ever	stets	always
manchmal	at any time	unaufhörlich	incessantly
mehrmals	sometimes	wieder, wiederum	again
meistens	repeatedly	(*elev.*)	at times
nie, niemals,	mostly	zeitweise	from time to time
nimmer (*lit.*)	*never*	zuweilen	*in between times*
		zwischendurch	

7.3.2 *gestern*, *heute* and *morgen*

These are the equivalent of English 'yesterday', 'today' and 'tomorrow', and they are used in compounds or in conjunction with words indicating periods of the day to give the equivalent of English 'last night', 'this afternoon', etc.:

gestern Morgen	*yesterday morning*
gestern Abend	*last night* (before bedtime)
vorgestern	*the day before yesterday*
heute Nacht	*tonight* (after bedtime), *last night*
heute Morgen/heute früh	(after bedtime)
heute Vormittag	*this morning*
heute Nachmittag	*this morning* (after breakfast)
heute Abend	*this afternoon*

morgen früh	*this evening, tonight* (before bedtime)
morgen Vormittag	*tomorrow morning*
übermorgen	*tomorrow morning* (after breakfast)
	the day after tomorrow

7.3.3 German equivalents of English 'then'

(a) *damals* refers to past time

i.e. meaning 'at that time':

Sie war **damals** sehr arm	*She was very poor, then*
Er war **damals** Anfang sechzig	At that time, he was in his early sixties
Damals kam der Kaiser jeden Sommer nach Bad Ischl	*In those days the Emperor went to Bad Ischl every summer*

(b) *dann* is used for other meanings of 'then' referring to time

especially in the sense of 'after that' with a series of actions or events:

Dann ist er weggefahren	*Then he left*
Erst bist du an der Reihe, **dann** ich	First it's your turn, then mine
Wenn er dir schreibt, **dann** musst du es deiner Mutter sagen	If he writes to you, then you'll have to tell your mother
Und wenn sie kommt, was machst du **dann** ?	*And if she comes, what will you do then?*

dann is not used after a preposition, cf. *bis dahin* 'till then', 'by then', *seither*, *seitdem* 'since then', *von da an* 'from then on', *vorher*, *zuvor* 'before then' (see also **7.3.4a**).

(c) To intensify a question, the German equivalent is *denn*

e.g. *Was ist **denn** daran so komisch?* See **9.1.6** for further details.

7.3.4 German equivalents for English 'before' and 'after'

(a) *vorher* and *zuvor* are the usual equivalents for English 'before'

Both can be used to refer to the past **or** the future:

Ich war ein Jahr **vorher/zuvor** da gewesen	*I had been there a year before*
Ich muss **vorher/zuvor** noch telefonieren	I've got to make a phone call before then
Er hatte uns am Tag **vorher/zuvor** besucht	He had been to visit us the day before
einige Zeit **vorher/zuvor**	*some time previously*

Referring to time up to the present moment, *früher* or *zuvor* is used, or, in a negative context, *noch*:

Sie hätten es mir **früher/zuvor** sagen sollen	*You ought to have told me before*
Ich habe sie **nie zuvor/noch nie** gesehen	*I've never seen her before*

(b) *danach* or *nachher* are the usual equivalents for English 'after(wards)'

danach implies some previous event or action, whilst *nachher* is more general:

Wir sind ins Kino gegangen, und **danach/nachher** haben wir zu Abend gegessen	*We went to the cinema, and afterwards we had dinner*
Der Wagen war **danach/nachher** nicht mehr fahrbereit	Afterwards the car was no longer in running order
Ich habe sie einen Monat **danach/nachher** gesehen	I saw her a month after(wards)/later
Das werde ich dir **nachher** erzählen	*I'll tell you that afterwards*

darauf is a frequent alternative to *danach* or *nachher* after words expressing a period of time:

Kurz **danach** /Kurz **nachher** /Kurz **darauf** habe ich sie wieder gesehen	*I saw her a short time after/shortly afterwards*
Am Tag **darauf/danach** sind wir ins Theater gegangen	*The day after we went to the theatre*

hinterher is also often used for 'afterwards', as is *im Nachhinein* in the sense of 'in retrospect':

Natürlich ist man **hinterher** immer klüger	*Of course you are always wiser afterwards*
Im Nachhinein war er enttäuscht über die Niederlage, aber mit seiner Mannschaft nicht unzufrieden (*BrZ*)	*Afterwards/In retrospect/Looking back he was disappointed at the defeat, but he was not dissatisfied with his team*

(c) *before* and *after* can also be used as prepositions and conjunctions in English

When ***before*** and ***after*** are used as **adverbs** they have the German equivalents outlined in **(a)** and **(b)** above. However, in English, *before* and *after* are also used as prepositions or conjunctions, and they then have different equivalents in German. **English learners need to be alert to these differences**.

(i) ***before***:

- The German equivalent of ***before*** when used as a **preposition** is ***vor*** (followed by a noun in the dative case, see **18.3.14c**):

in den Jahren **vor** dem ersten Weltkrieg	*in the years* **before** *the First World War*

- The most frequent German equivalent of ***before*** when used as a **conjunction** is ***bevor***, although *ehe* is also used in more formal registers, see **17.3.2**:

Zwei Wochen, **bevor** er starb, ist er nach Würzburg gefahren	*Two weeks* **before** *he died he drove to Würzburg*
Vier Jahre lang lebte er in München, drei Jahre in Bremen, **ehe** er 1961 wieder in die USA ging (*MM*)	*He lived in Munich for four years, and three in Bremen* **before** *returning to the USA in 1961*

(ii) ***after***

The German equivalent of ***after*** when used as a **preposition** is ***nach*** (followed by a noun in the dative case, see **18.2.6c**):

in den Jahren **nach** dem Ersten Weltkrieg	*in the years* **after** *the First World War*

- The German equivalent of ***after*** when used as a conjunction is ***nachdem***, see **17.3.4**:

Nachdem sie abgefahren war, fiel ihr ein, was sie vergessen hatte	*After she had driven off she realized what she had forgotten*

7.3.5 German equivalents for English 'recent(ly)'

German has no single word with the range of meaning of English 'recent(ly)'. The following are the main equivalents, and the choice depends on the precise meaning to be expressed:

vor kurzem/kürzlich unlängst/jüngst (*elev.*, *S. Ger.*)	}	*at a point in time not long ago*
neulich letztens (*elev.*)	}	*at a point in time not long ago* (but relevant to the present)
neuerdings letzthin in letzter Zeit seit kurzem		*up to and including the present* (sth. which started recently) *recently* (in the very recent past) *latterly* (over a period of time up to and including the present) *not for very long* (continuing to the present)

All these words and phrases are adverbial, so they have to be used in paraphrases to give German equivalents for the English adjective 'recent', e.g.:

auf der **kürzlich stattgefundenen** Konferenz	*at the recent conference*
bei unserer Begegnung **neulich**	at our recent meeting
als er **vor kurzem** krank war	during his recent illness
eine **erst kürzlich eingeführte** Neuerung	a (very) recent innovation
sein **neustes** Buch	*his most recent book*

Some other equivalents:

bis vor kurzem	*until recently*
Ich habe ihn noch später gesehen als Sie	I have seen him more recently than you
Kurt hat sie zuletzt gesehen	*Kurt has seen her most recently / just recently*

The adjective *rezent* is close in meaning to English 'recent', but in practice it is only widely used at present in Austria and Switzerland, e.g. *im Lichte der rezenten Erfahrungen* (*Presse*) 'in the light of recent experience', and in specialist geological or biological contexts, e.g. *rezente Amphibien* 'recent (i.e. not prehistoric) amphibians'.

7.4 Adverbs of manner, viewpoint, attitude and reason

A large number of adverbs fall into these categories, or into related subgroups which are not dealt with individually. It is convenient to deal with them all together here.

7.4.1 Adverbs of manner and viewpoint

(a) Adverbs of manner typically answer the question *Wie*?

Wie ist sie gefahren?	Sie ist **schnell** gefahren
Wie hat sie gesungen?	Sie hat **gut** gesungen
Wie hat er es gemacht?	Er hat es **anders** gemacht

When they are used in a sentence with *nicht*, the *nicht* always refers specifically to the adverb:

Sie hat **nicht deutlich** gesprochen (she did speak, but not clearly)

Werder Bremen hat gestern Abend in Leverkusen **nicht gut** gespielt (they played, but not well)

(b) Adverbs of viewpoint indicate a context in which the

statement is to be understood

They can be paraphrased by 'seen from a … point of view' or '…-ly speaking', e.g.:

Die Stadt liegt **verkehrsmäßig** ungünstig

(i.e. in terms of road and rail communications)

Finanziell war diese Entscheidung eine Katastrophe

(i.e. financially speaking)

Deutschland ist **wirtschaftlich** stärker geworden

(i.e. from an economic point of view)

(c) Most adjectives (and participles) can be used as adverbs

Most of these are in practice adverbs of manner or viewpoint. In English such adverbs are typically marked by the suffix '-ly', but German has no such ending, and these words have exactly the same form whether they are being used as adjectives or adverbs. Compare:

Er hat die Sache **überraschend schnell** erledigt	*He settled the matter surprisingly quickly*
Ein Dokument zeigt doch, dass er **mäßigend** und **bremsend** zu wirken versuchte (*Zeit*)	*A document shows nevertheless that he tried to exercise a moderating and calming influence*

An adverb qualifying an adjective before a noun is marked as such by having no ending. Compare:

ein **schön** geschnitzter Schrank	*a beautifully carved cupboard*
ein **schöner**, geschnitzter Schrank	*a beautiful carved cupboard*

This distinction is not always maintained in practice, see **6.1.3g**.

These adjective-adverbs can be used very widely and flexibly in German, often with compounding, in a way which can lack direct equivalents in English, which often has a rather different way of expressing ideas like these:

Er hat mir **brieflich** mitgeteilt, dass er anderer Meinung sei	*He informed me by letter that he was of a different opinion*
Widerrechtlich geparkte Fahrzeuge werden **kostenpflichtig** abgeschleppt	Illegally parked vehicles will be removed at the owner's expense
Das Mitbringen von Hunden ist **lebensmittelpolizeilich** verboten	*Bringing dogs (into the shop) is forbidden by order of the food inspectorate*

7.4.2 Adverbs of attitude

Adverbs of attitude express the speaker's comment on the content of the statement, i.e. whether he or she thinks it is probable, likely, welcome, well-known or the like. In many ways their function overlaps with that of the modal particles (see **Chapter 9**). Because they relate to the sentence as a whole they are often called *Satzadverbien* in German.

Anscheinend ist sie erst um sieben gekommen

(i.e. it appears to the speaker that she only arrived then)

Er fährt **leider** schon heute ab

(i.e. the speaker thinks it is unfortunate that he's going)

Natürlich / **Selbstverständlich** darfst du das machen

(i.e. the speaker's opinion is that it goes without saying)

Sie wird uns **sicher** (**lich**) helfen

(i.e. the speaker thinks that it is certain)

These adverbs of attitude have a number of characteristic features. In particular, although they can occur in a negative sentence, they cannot themselves be negated:

Sie kommen **hoffentlich** noch heute

(one can't say *nicht hoffentlich*)

Er fährt **leider** nicht weg

(*nicht leider* is not possible)

Sie ist **wahrscheinlich** nicht gekommen

(*nicht wahrscheinlich* … does not make sense)

Unlike adverbs of manner, they cannot answer the question *Wie?*, but they **can** be used to answer a yes/no question:

Singt sie heute? Ja, **bestimmt** / **leider** / **vielleicht** / **zweifellos**, etc.

(None of these words can answer the question ***Wie*** *singt sie?*)

7.4.3 Adverbs of reason

A large group of adverbs indicate cause, circumstance, condition, purpose or reason. The most frequent members of this group are:

allenfalls *at most*
andernfalls *otherwise*
dabei *at the same time*
dadurch *thereby*
daher *therefore*
dann *in that case*
darum *therefore*
dazu *to that end*
demnach *therefore*
demzufolge (formal) *therefore*
dennoch *nevertheless*
deshalb *therefore*
deswegen *therefore*
folglich *consequently*
gegebenenfalls *if necessary*
gleichwohl (formal) *nevertheless*
infolgedessen *consequently*
jedenfalls *in any case*
mithin (formal) *consequently*
nichtsdestoweniger *nevertheless*
somit *consequently*
sonst *otherwise*
trotzdem *nevertheless*

7.4.4 German adverbs for English verbs or clauses

Many German adverbs in this group have a verb or a subordinate clause construction as their only or most natural idiomatic English equivalent. The most frequent equivalent of English '**to like**', for example, is to use the German adverb ***gern*** with *haben* or another verb, e.g. *Ich esse* ***gern*** *Käsekuchen* 'I **like** cheesecake'; *Sie hat Ihren Lehrer ganz* ***gern*** 'She quite **likes** her teacher'.

Using these adverbs appropriately can make a significant difference for English learners in speaking or writing idiomatic German, and some of the most useful are given below. Sometimes a construction with a verb is also possible in German, so that 'It must be admitted that it isn't easy' could correspond to *Man muss zugeben, dass es nicht einfach ist* **or** to *Es ist freilich nicht einfach*, but in general, the equivalents with adverbs can sound more idiomatic and concise:

Das Problem ist **allerdings** schwierig	*I* **must admit** *that the problem is difficult*
Er wurde **allmählich** rot im Gesicht	*He* **began** *to get red in the face*
Er hat **andauernd** gespielt	*He* **kept on** *playing*
Er ist **angeblich** arbeitslos	*He* **claims** *to be unemployed*
Er ist **anscheinend** nicht gekommen	*It* **seems** *he didn't come*
Wir können Ihnen **bedauerlicherweise** nicht weiter behilflich sein	*We* **regret** *that we can be of no further assistance to you*
Er ist **bekanntlich** ein hervorragender Linguist	*Everyone* **knows** *that he is an outstanding linguist*
Hier können Sie **beliebig** lange bleiben	*You can stay here* **as long as you like**
Am besten behalten Sie das für sich	*You'd* **better** *keep that to yourself*
Thomas kommt **bestimmt** mit	*I'm* **sure** *Thomas is coming with us* / *Thomas is* **sure** *to be coming with us*
Wir haben **erfreulicherweise** das Spiel gewonnen	*I'm* **glad** *to say that we won the game*
Es ist **freilich** nicht einfach	*It* **must be admitted** *that it isn't easy*
Gegebenenfalls kann man auch eine andere Taste wählen	**If the need should arise** *, another key may be selected*

Im Sommer spielt er **gern** Tennis	*He* **likes** *playing tennis in summer*
Dienstags hat er **gewöhnlich** Tennis gespielt	*He* **used to** *play tennis on Tuesdays*
Hoffentlich erreichen wir die Hütte vor Sonnenuntergang	*I* **hope** *we shall reach the cabin before sunset*
Sie kann **leider** nicht kommen	*I'm* **afraid** *she can't come*
Im Winter spielt er **lieber** Fußball	*He* **prefers** *playing football in the winter*
Ich habe Reiten **lieber** als Radfahren	*I* **prefer** *riding to cycling*
Er kommt **möglicherweise** noch vor dem Abendessen	*It is* **possible** *that he will be coming before dinner*
Sie erschien **nicht**	*She* **failed** *to appear*
Die Firma stellt diese Ersatzteile **nicht mehr** her	*The company has* **ceased** / **stopped** *making these spare parts*
Nimm dir **ruhig** noch etwas zu trinken	**Don't be afraid** *to help yourself to another drink*
Alle Insassen sind **vermutlich** ums Leben gekommen	*It is* **presumed** *that all the passengers lost their lives*
Er las **weiter**	*He* **continued** *to read/* **went on** *reading*
Ich habe sie **zufällig** in der Stadt gesehen	*I* **happened** / **chanced** *to see her in town*
Zweifellos wird auch dieses Jahr sehr wenig Schnee im Allgäu fallen	*There is* **no doubt** *that very little snow will fall in the Allgäu this year either*

7.4.5 *anders* and *sonst*

These two adverbs are very similar in meaning and both can be equivalents of English ***else***. However, they are not always interchangeable.

(a) *anders* means 'else' or 'differently'

anders was originally the genitive of the adjective *ander*, see **5.5.2**. It

usually has the written form *anders* (very occasionally *anderes*), which differentiates it from the nominative/accusative singular neuter of *ander*, which is normally written *andres* or *anderes*. It is used as follows:

(i) In the meaning 'else' with *jemand* and *niemand*:

Es ist jemand **anders** gekommen	*Somebody else came*
Der Schirm gehört jemand **anders**	The umbrella belongs to somebody else
Ich habe mit niemand **anders** gesprochen	I didn't talk to anybody else
Sie hat niemand **anders** als dich gesucht	*She wasn't looking for anyone else but you*

In standard German, *anders* is invariable in combination with *jemand* and *niemand*, see **5.5.15b**. In South German usage, though, inflected forms of *ander* often occur rather than invariable *anders*, especially in the accusative and dative, e.g. *jemand / niemand anderen*, *jemand / niemand anderem*.

(ii) *anders* is used in the meaning 'else' with *wo*, *wohin*, *woher*, *(n)irgendwo*. Note the various alternative combinations:

woanders/anderswo/irgendwo anders	*somewhere else / elsewhere*
nirgendwo anders	nowhere else
Ich gehe irgendwo anders hin/ woandershin/ anderswohin	I'm going somewhere else
Er kommt anderswoher, nicht aus Hamburg	He comes from somewhere else, not from Hamburg
Ich gehe nirgendwo anders hin	*I'm not going anywhere else*

(iii) *anders* also means 'different(ly)', 'in a different way':

Er ist ganz **anders** als sein Bruder	*He is quite different to his brother*

Du musst es irgendwie **anders** anpacken	You'll have to tackle it differently
Das klingt jetzt anders	That sounds different now
Compare:	It is rather different
Es ist etwas **anders**	*It is something else*
Es ist etwas **and(e)res**	

(b) *sonst* means 'else' or 'otherwise'

(i) In some contexts *sonst* can overlap with the meaning of *anders* 'else' or *ander* 'other', 'different'. Compare the following alternatives:

Kannst du **etwas anderes** vorschlagen? Kannst du **sonst (noch) etwas** vorschlagen?	}	*Can you suggest anything else?*
War **noch jemand anders** da? War **sonst noch jemand** da?	}	*Was anyone else here?*
Niemand anders hat mir geholfen **Niemand sonst** hat mir geholfen	}	*Nobody else helped me*
sonst (irgendwo) / **irgendwo sonst** / **anderswo**, etc. (see **(a)** above)	}	*somewhere/anywhere else*
Ich muss **noch sonst wohin** Ich muss **anderswohin**	}	*I've got to go somewhere else*
Wenn **noch andere** Probleme auftauchen	}	*If any other problems arise, …*

Wenn **sonst noch** Probleme auftauchen	
Wer kann es **sonst** gesagt haben? (less usual: **Wer anders** kann es gesagt haben?)	*Who else can have said it?*

(ii) However, if the sense is clearly 'different' or 'other', only *ander* or, where appropriate, *anders*, can be used. Compare:

Da ist Professor Niebaum und **niemand anders**	*That's Professor Niebaum and nobody else* (i.e. not a different person)
Da ist Professor Niebaum und **sonst niemand**	*That's Professor Niebaum and nobody else* (i.e. he's the only one there)

(iii) If the meaning is clearly 'in addition', 'apart from that', 'otherwise', then only *sonst* is possible:

Wer kommt **sonst** noch?	*Who else is coming?*
Mit wem haben Sie **sonst** noch gesprochen?	Who else did you talk to?
Was hat sie **sonst** noch gesagt?	What else did she say?
sonst irgendwann	some/any other time
Sonst geht alles gut	Otherwise all is well
Wir müssen uns beeilen, **sonst** verpassen wir den Zug	We'll have to hurry, otherwise we'll miss the train
länger als **sonst**	*longer than usual*

7.4.6 Adverbs in *-weise*

The suffix *-weise* is very productive to form adverbs of manner or attitude.

(a) Adverbs formed from a noun or a verb *+ weise*

These are typically manner adverbs, meaning 'by way of', 'in the form of':

andeutungsweise *by way of a hint*
ausnahmsweise *by way of exception*
beispielsweise *by way of example*
beziehungsweise *or, as the case may be* (**17.1.3b**)
bruchstückweise *in the form of fragments*
dutzendweise *by the dozen*
familienweise *in families*
gruppenweise *in groups*
massenweise *on a massive scale*
paarweise *in pairs*
Die Flüchtlinge strömten **massenweise** über die Grenze
Sein neues Buch ist **stellenweise** ganz gut
Er wird **stundenweise** bezahlt
pfundweise *by the pound*
probeweise *on approval*
ruckweise *by jerks*
schrittweise *step by step*
stückweise *piecemeal*
stundenweise *by the hour*
teilweise *partly*
versuchsweise *tentatively*
zeitweise *temporarily*
zwangsweise *compulsorily*
The refugees were streaming **in hordes** *across the border*
His new book is quite good **in places**
He is paid **by the hour**

These forms were originally only adverbs, but they are increasingly being used as adjectives as well:

eine **probeweise** Anstellung
eine **ruckweise** Bewegung
der **stückweise** Verkauf
eine **schrittweise** Anhebung des Rentenalters auf 70 Jahre (*HMP*)
die **teilweisen** Verbesserungen
eine **stundenweise** Bezahlung
die **stufenweisen** Fortschritte

However, this usage is only generally considered acceptable with nouns which denote a process, as in the examples above. It is by no means unknown for them to be used with other nouns, e.g. *der stückweise Preis* or *eine auszugsweise Urkunde*, but this is commonly regarded as incorrect.

(b) Adverbs in *-erweise*

Many adverbs of attitude are formed from adjectives or participles with the suffix - *weise* and the linking element - *er-*, e.g. *möglicherweise* from *möglic h*, *bezeichnenderweise* from *bezeichnend*. Similarly:

bedauerlicherweise *regrettably*	liebenswürdigerweise *obligingly*
begreiflicherweise *understandably*	möglicherweise *possibly, perhaps*
dummerweise *foolishly*	natürlicherweise *of course*
erstaunlicherweise *astonishingly*	normalerweise *normally*
glücklicherweise *fortunately*	unglücklicherweise *unfortunately*
interessanterweise *interestingly*	unnötigerweise *unnecessarily*
komischerweise *funnily*	unvermuteterweise *unexpectedly*

As these are adverbs of **attitude**, indicating a comment by the speaker on the statement, their meaning is different from that of the adverb of **manner** from which they are derived, and also from that of the corresponding phrase with the preposition *auf* and the noun *Weise*. Compare:

Er war **merkwürdig** müde	*He was strangely tired*
Er war **merkwürdigerweise** müde	Strange to say, he was tired
Er war **in merkwürdiger Weise** müde	He was tired in an unusual way
Er hat **vernünftig** geantwortet	He replied sensibly
Er hat **vernünftigerweise** geantwortet	Sensibly enough, he replied
Er hat **auf vernünftige Weise** geantwortet	*He replied in a sensible way*

Adverbs in - *erweise* are **never** used as adjectives.

7.5 Adverbs of degree

7.5.1 Common adverbs of degree and their use

(a) Adverbs of degree typically emphasize, amplify or tone down another part of speech

They are sometimes called 'intensifiers', and they are most often used to modify adjectives or other adverbs. The following are the most frequent in German:

außerordentlich *extraordinarily*	genug *enough*	sehr (see **7.5.2**) *very*
äußerst *extremely*	geradezu *virtually*	überaus *extremely*
beinahe *almost, nearly*	höchst *extremely, highly*	verhältnismäßig *relatively*
besonders *especially*	kaum *hardly, scarcely*	völlig *completely*
durchaus *absolutely, thoroughly*	mäßig *moderately*	vollkommen *completely*
etwas *a little*	nahezu *virtually*	wenig *little*
fast *almost, nearly*	recht *really*	ziemlich *fairly*
ganz *quite*	relativ *relatively*	zu *too*

eine **durchaus** selbstkritische Einsicht	*a thoroughly self-critical understanding*
Der Kaffee ist **etwas** süß	The coffee is a little sweet
Er fährt schnell **genug**	He's driving fast enough
Das ist **geradezu** lächerlich	That is little short of ridiculous
Die Suppe war nur **mäßig** warm	The soup was (only) moderately warm
eine **nahezu** optimale Lösung des Problems	a virtually optimal solution to the problem
Er arbeitet **recht** gut	He works really well
ein **überaus** ehrliches Geschäft	a thoroughly honest transaction
Dieser Schriftsteller ist **wenig** bekannt	*This author is little known*

This list is not exhaustive, and many more occur, especially in colloquial speech, e.g. *echt*, *enorm*, *irrsinnig*, *ungeheuer*, *unheimlich*, *verdammt*.

(b) Some adverbs of degree are used only or principally

with adjectives in the comparative or superlative

The following are the most frequent in use:

bedeutend *significantly*: Die Donau ist **bedeutend** länger als der Rhein

beträchtlich *considerably*: Die Zugspitze ist **beträchtlich** höher als die anderen Gipfel in den bayrischen Alpen

denkbar *possible*: Sie hat den **denkbar** schlechtesten Eindruck gemacht

entschieden *decidedly*: Er hat **entschieden** schlechter gespielt als vor einem Jahr

viel *much*: Diese Schule ist **viel** größer als meine

weit *far*: Der Wagen ist **weit** schneller, als ich dachte

bei weitem (*by*) *far*: Er ist **bei weitem** besser als Jochen/der Beste in der Klasse

weitaus (*by*) *far*: Isabella ist **weitaus** reifer, als man ihrem Alter nach schließen dürfte Deutschland blieb natürlich auch der **weitaus** wichtigste Handelspartner der Schweiz (*NZZ*)

wesentlich *substantially*: Er hat heute **wesentlich** besser gespielt

(c) *hoch* 'highly'

hoch can be used as an intensifier with some abstract adjectives. It is usually compounded with them: *hochempfindlich*, *hochfrequent*, *hochinteressant*, *hochgeschätzt*, *hochqualifiziert, hochwahrscheinlich*. The superlative form *höchst* is used in the same way in a few cases, e.g. *höchstwahrscheinlich*.

(d) *lange* and *längst*

lange and *längs t* are used before a negative to indicate a considerable

difference in degree. In such contexts *lange* is often preceded by *noch*:

Das ist **noch lange nicht** gut genug	*That is not nearly good enough*
Dieses Buch ist **lange/längst nicht** so gut wie sein letztes	*This book isn't nearly as good as his last one*

7.5.2 *sehr*

sehr is chiefly used as an adverb of degree (= 'very'):

Sie weiß es **sehr** gut	Das ist **sehr** nett von dir

However, it has a wider range of use than English *very*.

(a) It can modify a verb or phrase, corresponding to English 'very much'

Ich bewundere sie **sehr**	Er ist **sehr** dafür	Das interessiert mich **sehr**
Das ist **sehr** nach meinem Geschmack	Er hat sich **sehr** verändert	

(b) After so, wie or zu, it can denote degree, like English 'much'

In these contexts *sehr* is used rather than *viel*:

Nicht **so sehr** die Handlung wie der Stil hat mich gefesselt

Wie sehr ich es bedaure, dass sie durchgefallen ist!

Er hat es sich **zu sehr** zu Herzen genommen

7.6 Interrogative adverbs

The German interrogative adverbs introduce questions and correspond to the **English *wh* - words**. They fall into similar groups to other adverbs:

(a) Time

wann?	*when?*	**Wann** kommt der Zug in Gelsenkirchen an?
bis wann?	*until when?, how long?*	**Bis wann** bleibt ihr hier?
seit wann?	*by when?*	**Bis wann** seid ihr damit fertig?
wie lange?	*since when?, how long?*	**Seit wann** spielen Sie Tennis?
wie oft?	*how long?*	**Wie lange** wollt ihr heute noch spielen?
	how often?	**Wie oft** fährt der Zug nach Putbus?

(b) Place and direction (see also 7.2.1)

wo?	*where?*	**Wo** steckt die Angelika jetzt?
wohin?	*where (to)?*	**Wohin** fahrt ihr heute?/ **Wo** fahrt ihr heute **hin** ?
woher?	*where from?*	**Woher** kommt der Wagen?/ **Wo** kommt der Wagen **her** ?
von wo? (*coll.*)	*where from?*	**Von wo** kommt der Wagen?

(c) Manner

wie?	*how?*	**Wie** habt ihr das nur gemacht?

(d) Reason

warum?	*why?*	**Warum** wollt ihr nicht gehen?
was? (*coll.*)	*why?*	**Was** rennst du denn so schnell? (see **5.3.3f**)
wieso? (*coll.*)	*why?*	**Wieso** wollt ihr nicht gehen?
weshalb? (*formal*)	*why?*	**Weshalb** wollt ihr nicht gehen?
wozu?	*what ... for?*	**Wozu** benutzt man das?

These interrogative adverbs can also introduce indirect questions (see **14.4.4** and **17.2.2c**), e.g.:

Er hat mich gefragt, **wann** ich morgen komme

Ich habe dir doch gesagt, **wie** man das macht

For the interrogative pronouns ***was*** and ***wer***, see **5.3.3**. For the interrogative determiner ***welcher***, see **5.3.1**.

7.7 Comparison of adverbs

Like adjectives (see section **6.5**), adverbs which denote a quality or a quantity can have comparative and superlative forms, e.g.:

positive degree:	Karl redet **laut**	*Karl talks loudly*
comparative degree:	Erich redet **lauter**	Erich talks louder
superlative degree:	Konrad redet **am lautesten**	*Konrad talks the loudest*

7.7.1 Formation of the comparative and superlative of adverbs

(a) Regular formation of the comparative and superlative

(i) The comparative is formed with the ending - ***er*** and is identical to the comparative of adjectives:

Vettel fährt aber schnell **er**	Ute musste etwas langsam **er** sprechen

(ii) The superlative of adverbs is formed with the ending - ***st***, as with adjectives, but it is always used with the preposition ***am*** and the weak adjective ending - ***en*** (see also **6.5.3a**):

Vettel fährt **am schnellsten**	*Vettel drives fastest*
Von der Burg aus sieht man es **am** klarsten	You can see it most clearly from the castle
Am einfachsten steigst du in Innsbruck um	*The simplest is for you to change trains in Innsbruck*

(b) Irregularities in the formation of the comparative and superlative of adverbs

(i) Adjectives with irregular comparative and superlative forms have the same basic irregular forms if they can be used as adverbs, e.g:

Monika spielt gut – Eva spielt **besser** – Antje spielt **am besten**

Peter ist lange geblieben – Thomas ist **länger** geblieben – Klaus ist am **längsten** geblieben

(ii) A few adverbs have irregular comparative and superlative

forms:

bald	**eher**	am **ehest** en	*soon*
gern	**lieber**	am **liebst** en	*willingly, gladly*
oft	**öfter**	das **meist** e	often
viel	**mehr**	das wenig **st** e/	*much, many*
wenig	wenig **er** / **minder**	das **mindeste**	*little, few*

The adverb ***oft*** has no superlative form, and the nearest equivalent to English 'most often' is *am häufigsten* 'most frequently'.

The comparative *öfter* can be used in an 'absolute' sense (see **6.5.2e**), with the meaning 'fairly often'.

(iii) Notes on the use of the comparative and superlative forms of *viel* and *wenig*:

- **mehr** and ***weniger*** are adverbs, not adjectives, they do not have any endings even when used with a following noun, e.g. *Er hat* ***weniger*** *Geld als ich*; *Sie hat* ***mehr*** *Verstand als du.*
- **minder** is only used in formal written German. It is only used to qualify adjectives, most commonly with a preceding *nicht*, e.g. Anderswo zwischen Ostsee und Erzgebirge ist die Lage der Denkmalpflege nicht **minder** prekär. (*Spiegel*)
- **mindest** can be used for 'least' in the sense 'slightest' but its use is restricted to formal registers: Er hatte nicht die **mindesten** Aussichten zu gewinnen.
- ***nichts weniger als*** normally means 'anything but', i.e. the same as *alles andere als*, e.g. *Er ist* **nichts weniger als** klug 'He is anything but clever'. For English 'nothing less than', German often uses a positive statement: *Das ist* ***wirklich*** *katastrophal* 'That is nothing less than catastrophic'. However, some Germans are now using *nichts weniger als* in the sense of 'nothing less than', and ambiguity is possible.

7.7.2 Other superlative forms of adverbs

(a) Absolute adverbial superlatives can be formed in *aufs ...ste*

e.g. ***aufs** einfach **ste**, **aufs** genau **este***, etc. The form can be spelled with a small or a capital letter: *aufs einfachste/aufs Einfachste* (see **21.2.1**). The preposition and definite article can be written out in full if emphasis is needed: *auf das einfachste/Einfachste*. This form is common in formal writing:

Der große runde Tisch war **aufs festlichste/ Festlichste** geschmückt (*Dürrenmatt*)	*The large round table was decorated in a most festive way*
Herr Naumann war **aufs äußerste/ Äußerste** gereizt (*MM*)	Mr Naumann was exceedingly irritated
Lange Zeit hat der Ministerpräsident jeden Verdacht **auf das heftigste/Heftigste** dementiert	*For a long time the Prime Minister denied all suspicions most vehemently*

(b) Adverbial superlatives in *-st*

These consist simply of the superlative stem, whether regular or irregular. Some are in common use in speech and writing, often with special meanings:

äußerst *extremely*	meist *mostly*
höchst *highly, extremely*	möglichst *as ... as possible; if at all possible*
jüngst (*elev.*) *recently*	unlängst *recently*
längst *for a long time, a long time ago*	The situation is highly problematic
Die Situation ist **höchst** problematisch	He died a long time ago
Er ist **längst** gestorben	You must make the best possible impression

Du musst einen **möglichst** guten Eindruck machen	*She got back recently*
Sie ist **unlängst** zurückgekehrt	

The following are typically used in formulaic idioms in formal registers:

eiligst *as quickly as possible*	höflichst *respectfully*
freundlichst *friendly*	schleunigst *as promptly as possible*
gefälligst, gütigst *kindly*	sorgfältigst *most carefully*
herzlichst *most cordially*	tunlichst *absolutely*
Ich danke Ihnen **herzlichst**	I thank you most cordially
Sie werden **höflichst** gebeten, diesen Irrtum ohne Verzug zu berichtigen	You are respectfully requested to rectify this mistake without delay
Wir machten uns **schleunigst** aus dem Staube (*Dönhoff*)	We quickly got up off the floor
Jeder Lärm ist **tunlichst** zu vermeiden	*Any noise is absolutely to be avoided*

New formations in - ***st*** are quite frequent, especially in journalism, where their conciseness can be exploited:

Die Böhmendeutschen sind nicht ausgesiedelt, sondern **brutalst** vertrieben worden (*Presse*)	*The Germans of Bohemia were not resettled, but driven out in the most brutal fashion*

Some forms in - *st*, i.e. *best-, größt-, höchst-, kleinst-, kürzest-* can be compounded with *möglich* to mean 'the best possible', etc.:

die **bestmöglich** e Lösung	die **kleinstmöglich** e Summe
der **größtmöglich** e Schaden	der **kürzestmöglich** e Weg

(c) Adverbial superlatives in *-stens*

These forms typically have special idiomatic meanings:

bestens *very well*	schnellstens *as quickly as possible*

frühestens *at the earliest*	spätestens *at the latest*
höchstens *at the most*	strengstens *strictly*
meistens *mostly*	wärmstens *most warmly*
mindestens *at least*	wenigstens *at least*
nächstens *shortly, soon*	At most thirty guests are coming
Es kommen **höchstens** dreißig Gäste	I mostly get up early
Ich stehe **meistens** früh auf	I need at least three thousand euros for this trip
Ich brauche **mindestens** dreitausend Euro für diese Reise	We'll arrive at six at the latest
Wir kommen **spätestens** um sechs an	Smoking is strictly prohibited
Rauchen ist **strengstens** verboten	*He might at least ring up*
Er könnte **wenigstens** anrufen	

wenigstens and *mindestens* are often interchangeable, but *mindestens* emphasizes the idea of the absolute minimum possible rather more strongly. It is used less often when no actual figure is mentioned, in which case *zumindest* (see **(c)** below) is a possible, rather more emphatic alternative to *wenigstens*.

(d) Adverbial superlatives in *zu- … -st*

Only a few of these are in current use, all with idiomatic meanings:

zumindest *at* (*the very*) *least*	zutiefst (*very*) *deeply*
zunächst *at first, in the first place*	zuvorderst (*right*) *at the front*
zuoberst (*right*) *on top*	He could at least have said hello to us
Er hätte uns **zumindest** grüßen können	The offer looked attractive at first
Das Angebot sah **zunächst** verlockend aus	She took the book which was lying on top
Sie nahm das Buch, das **zuoberst** lag	*The accused deeply regrets his inappropriate behaviour*
Der Angeklagte bereut sein Fehlverhalten **zutiefst** (*NUZ*)	

Numerals

This chapter deals with words for NUMBERS and NUMERALS in German and their associated forms and uses:

- **Cardinal numbers**, such as 'one', 'two', 'three', etc. (section **8.1**)
- **Ordinal numbers**, such as 'first', 'second', 'third', etc. (section **8.2**)
- **Fractions** and **decimals** (section **8.3**)
- Other **numerical usages** (section **8.4**)
- **Times** and **dates** (section **8.5**)
- **Addresses** (section **8.6**)

8.1 Cardinal numbers

CARDINAL NUMBERS are the numerals used in counting. Table 8.1 illustrates the most important forms, and the rest of this section provides further information on these.

Table 8.1 The forms of the cardinal numbers

0 null	**10** zehn	**20** zwanzig	**30** dreißig
1 eins	**11** elf	**21**	**40** vierzig
2 zwei	**12** zwölf	einundzwanzig	**50** fünfzig
3 drei	**13** dreizehn	**22**	**60** sechzig
4 vier	**14** vierzehn	zweiundzwanzig	**70** siebzig
5 fünf	**15** fünfzehn	**23**	**80** achtzig
6 sechs	**16** sechzehn	dreiundzwanzig	**90** neunzig

7 sieben
8 acht
9 neun

17 siebzehn
18 achtzehn
19 neunzehn

24
vierundzwanzig
25
fünfundzwanzig
26
sechsundzwanzig
27
siebenundzwanzig
28
achtundzwanzig
29
neunundzwanzig

91 einundneunzig
92
zweiundneunzig
93
dreiundneunzig

100 (ein)hundert
101
hundert(und)eins
102 hundertzwei
151
(ein)hunderteinundfünfzig
200 zweihundert
535
fünfhundertfünfunddreißig
999
neunhundertneunundneunzig

1000
(ein)tausend
1099
tausend(und)neunundneunzig
1100
(ein)tausendeinhundert/
elfhundert
2305
zweitausenddreihundertfünf
10 000
zehntausend
50 000
fünfzigtausend
100 000
hunderttausend

564 297
fünfundsechzigtausendzweihundertsiebenundneunzig

1 000 000 eine Million
2 000 000 zwei Millionen

1 000 000 000
eine Milliarde
1 000 000 000 000
eine Billion

5 276 423 fünf Millionen
zweihundertsechsundsiebzigtausendvierhundertdreiundzwanzig

8.1.1 Spoken and written forms of the cardinal numbers

(a) Long numbers are rarely written out in full

i.e. those with more than one element, like *zweiunddreißig*, *hundertzwanzig*. In practice, complex numbers are rarely written fully except on cheques, and, in general, figures are used in written German more often than is usual in English.

(b) Numbers higher than a thousand

These can be given with **spaces** every three digits, i.e. ***564 297***, or with a **point**, e.g. ***564.297***. This is quite different to English or American practice and needs to be carefully noted to avoid confusion, especially as a comma is used in German rather than a point to indicate decimals, see **8.3.1d**.

(c) *hundert or einhundert; tausend or eintausend*?

English learners tend to overuse the longer form *einhundert* because of the similarity to English 'a hundred'. However, it is used less frequently than the shorter alternative *hundert*, and the long form *eintausend* is much less usual than simple *tausend*. However, *ein* is normally inserted in complex numbers, e.g. 101 100 *hundert* ***ein*** *tausend* ***ein*** *hundert*.

(d) *und* can be used between *hundert* and *eins*

However, English speakers tend to overuse this, because of the similarity to English 'a hundred **and one**'. Nevertheless, *und* is optional (and less frequent in practice), as in *hundert(und)eins*, *zweihundert(und)eins*, as also between *tausend* and tens or units, e.g. *tausend(und)eins*, *viertausend(und)elf*, *zwanzigtausend(und)zweiunddreißig*.

(e) *eine Million, eine Milliarde* and *eine Billion* are nouns

They thus have a plural ending where necessary, e.g. *zwei Million **en***; *fünf Million **en** vierhunderttausend*. Numbers higher than *eine Milliarde* are rare in normal use, so that, for instance, *tausend Milliarden* is more usual than *eine Billion*.

English speakers should note that *Milliarde* is the equivalent of what is nowadays usually referred to as 'billion' in British and (especially) American usage, i.e. a thousand million, whereas the rarely used German *Billion* is a million million.

The plural form is used when **one** million is followed by a decimal: *1,4 Millionen Euro*. This is spoken as *einskommavier Millionen Euro*.

(f) *zwo* is often heard for *zwei*

This otherwise archaic form is used to avoid confusion with *drei*, especially on the telephone. However, it has become common in other spoken contexts and is sometimes extended to ***2*** in complex numbers, e.g. ***zwo** unddreißig*, and the ordinal *der **zwo** te*.

(g) The numbers from *2* to *12* have alternative forms with an additional *-e*

e.g. *sechs **e**, neun **e**, elf **e***. These are common in colloquial speech (especially in the South) for emphasis, particularly when stating the time: *Ich bin um* **fünfe** aufgestanden, and in counting scores in card games.

(h) Longer numbers are often stated in pairs

e.g. *4711* (a brand of eau de Cologne), spoken *siebenundvierzig elf*. This

usage is not uncommon with telephone numbers, although it is very much a matter of individual preference. Thus, a number like *(0621) 54 87 23* can be given as *null sechs zwo eins – vierundfünfzig siebenundachtzig dreiundzwanzig*.

(i) Usage with years

The years from *1100* to *1999* are usually stated in hundreds in a similar way to English, so that *1996* will usually be given as *neunzehnhundertsechsundneunzig*.

However, years since the millennium are given with *zweitausend*, so that, for example, *2009* is *zweitausendneun* and *2015* is *zweitausendfünfzehn*. This differs from English, where using 'twenty' has become established.

(j) Using *beide* for English 'two'

beide is often used where English uses the numeral 'two'. This is particularly the case where it is a question of 'two and only two' of the relevant items, see **5.5.3b**, e.g. *Ich möchte diese beiden Hemden kaufen* 'I would like to buy these two shirts'.

(k) *fünfzehn* and *fünfzig*

These are often pronounced ***fuff*** *zehn* and ***fuff*** *zig* in colloquial speech.

(l) Colloquial German *zig*

Colloquial German uses *zig* to indicate an indefinite large number, corresponding to English 'umpteen':

Ich kenne sie schon **zig** Jahre	*I've known her umpteen years*

Die ist mit **zig** Sachen in die Kurve gefahren	*She took the bend at a fair old speed*

The compounds ***zig*** *mal* 'umpteen times', ***zig*** *tausend* 'umpteen thousand', etc. are also frequently used. These forms are sometimes seen written with an initial hyphen: *-zig*, *- zigmal*, etc., but this is not considered correct.

(m) Cardinal numbers used as nouns

If these refer to the numeral, they are feminine (see **1.1.5d**) and have a plural in *- en* if required:

Die Sieben ist eine Glückszahl	In Mathe habe ich nie **eine Fünf** gehabt
Im Abitur hat er **drei Zweien** und **eine Eins** gekriegt	**Die Hundert** ist eine dreistellige Zahl

The feminine nouns ***die*** *Hundert* and ***die*** *Tausend*, referring to the numbers as such, are to be distinguished from the neuters ***das*** *Hundert* and ***das*** *Tausend*, which refer to quantities (see **8.1.5b**).

(n) The numeral 7 is usually written in handwriting with a stroke

i.e. 7. This helps to distinguish it from 1, which Germans always write with an initial sweep, i.e. *1*.

8.1.2 *eins, ein, einer* 'one'

(a) The form *eins* is used in isolation as a numeral

i.e. in counting and the like:

Wir müssen mit der (Linie) eins zum Bahnhof fahren	*We've got to take the number one* (i.e. tram, bus) *to the station*

This form is also used with decimals (see **8.3.1d**): *einskommasieben*

(b) The form *ein* is used with a following noun

It agrees with the following noun for case and gender and has the same endings as the indefinite article, see **Table 4.3**:

ein Tisch	*one table*
eine Kirche	one church
ein Buch	one book
durch **einen** Fehler	by one mistake
aus **einem** Grund	*for one reason*

The **numerical** sense of *ein* (i.e. 'one') is distinguished from the **indefinite article** *ein* (i.e. 'a, an') in speech by always being pronounced in full, see **4.1.2b**. In writing, if there is a possibility of ambiguity in context, the numerical sense can be made clear typographically, although in practice this is quite rare, e.g.:

éin Buch *ein* Buch ein Buch **ein** Buch

After *hundert* and *tausend*, e.g. *301*, *2001*, there is considerable uncertainty as to how or whether to decline forms of *ein*.

One possibility is to use a **declined form of - *ein*** with a **singular** noun, e.g. *ein Buch mit dreihundertundeiner Seite*. The combinations *hundertundeine Mark* and *Tausendundeine Nacht* 'The 1001 Nights' are well established idiomatically.

Many Germans feel this sounds odd, and use the alternative of **undeclined - *ein***, with a **plural** noun, e.g. *ein Buch mit dreihundertein Seiten*.

As this can sound rather strange, too, a further alternative, using the

invariant form - ***eins*** with a **plural** noun, is increasingly preferred, e.g. *ein Buch mit dreihundertundeins Seiten*; *Wir haben hundertundeins tolle Ideen.*

(c) The form *einer* is used as a pronoun

Its declension is given in **Table 5.11**.

einer der Männer *one of the men*	**ein(e)s** der Häuser *one of the houses*
Wir haben einen Schäferhund, und ihr habt auch **einen**, nicht?	

More details on the pronoun *einer* are given in **5.5.4**.

(d) After a determiner, *ein-* declines like an adjective

e.g. ***der eine*** … , 'the one …'

Das Dorf hatte bloß **die eine** Straße	Mit **seinem einen** Auge sieht er schlecht

(e) *ein* has no ending in a few constructions

(i) When followed by ***oder*** or ***bis*** and **another number**, e.g. *ein oder zwei*, *ein bis zwei*:

Ich pflückte **ein oder zwei** Rosen	Wir mussten **ein bis zwei** Tage warten
Er kam vor **ein oder zwei** Wochen	Ich sprach mit **ein oder zwei** anderen

(ii) When followed by ***andere*** or ***derselbe***, the alternatives of declining *ein* or leaving it endingless are equally acceptable:

Ein(er) oder der andere machte	*One or other made a brief*

eine kurze Bemerkung	*remark*
An **ein(em)** und demselben Tag machten drei Firmen Pleite	*On one and the same day three* *firms went bankrupt*

Followed by ***mehrere***, *ein* is more commonly inflected: *vor einem* (rarely: *ein*) *oder mehreren Monaten* 'one or more months ago'.

(iii) *ein* is not inflected in *ein Uhr* 'one o'clock', see **Table 8.3**. (Compare *eine Uhr* 'a/one clock')

8.1.3 Declension of cardinal numbers

Apart from *ein* 'one' (see **8.1.2**), cardinal numbers do not usually decline to show case or gender in German. Thus:

gegen sechs Kinder	die sechs Kinder
mit sechs Kindern	mit den sechs Kindern
wegen sechs Kindern	wegen der sechs Kinder

However, there are one or two special contexts where numbers can have endings to show case.

(a) *zwei* and *drei* can have the genitive forms *zweier* and *dreier*

These forms are only used in formal writing, and although they are quite frequent there, their use is wholly optional, e.g.:

Der Taufe **zweier** Kinder aus der Ehe stimmte er zu (*MM*)	*He agreed to the baptism of two children of the marriage*
die vielerlei Eindrücke **dreier** anstrengender Tage (*Zeit*)	*the various impressions from three strenuous days*

A following adjective has the strong ending *-er* (see **6.1.3a**), as in the second example above, but an adjective used as a noun usually has the

weak ending *-en*: *die Seligkeit zweier* ***Verliebten***. In less formal registers a phrase with *von* is always used, e.g. *die Eindrücke von drei anstrengenden Tagen*, and in practice this is also an acceptable alternative in formal writing.

(b) The numbers from *2* to *12* can have a dative in *-en* when used in isolation

i.e. when no noun follows:

> Nur einer von **zweien** ist als gesund zu bezeichnen (*Zeit*)
>
> als sich die Tür hinter den **dreien** geschlossen hatte (*Welt*)

Using the form with an ending is optional, but it is quite common, even in spoken German, especially with the numbers *2*, *3* and *4*.

It is most frequent for added emphasis and in set phrases such as *auf allen vieren* 'on all fours', *mit dreien* 'with three (Jacks)' (in the card game *Skat*), and in the formula *zu zweien*, *dreien*, *vieren*, etc. 'in twos, threes, fours', e.g. *dieser Spaziergang* **zu zweien**.

A rather more frequent alternative to express 'in twos, threes, fours', etc. is to use the preposition *zu* with a form of the numeral in *- t* (i.e. using the stem of the ordinal, see **8.2.1**), e.g. *zu zweit*, *zu dritt*, *zu viert*. A distinction is sometimes made between *zu zweien* 'in pairs' and *zu zweit* 'as a pair' (i.e. when there are only two). Compare:

> Sie gingen **zu zweien** über die Straße — *They crossed the road in pairs*
>
> Sie gingen **zu zweit** über die Straße — *The two of them crossed the road together*

However, this distinction is not always upheld consistently.

8.1.4 Adjectives from cardinal numbers

Adjectives can be formed from cardinal numbers with the suffix *-er*, e.g. *fün f* ***er***, *zehn* ***er***. This form is used to denote value and measurement, or with reference to years. When they are used as adjectives, they do not decline (see **6.1.3g**). When they are used as nouns, they have the ending - *n* in the dative case:

Ich habe zwei Zehner und einen Hunderter	*I've got two ten euro notes and a hundred euro note*
zwei Fünfziger	*two fifty cent pieces* **or** *two fifty euro notes*
zehn achtziger Marken	ten 80 cent stamps
eine Achtziger	an 80 cent stamp
die Zehner und die Einer	tens and units
eine Sechserpackung	a six-pack
in den neunziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts	in the 1990s
ein Mann in den Vierzigern	a man in his forties
eine Mittfünfzigerin	a woman in her mid-fifties
ein Dreitausender	a mountain (over) 3000 metres high
ein vierundneunziger Heppenheimer Krötenbrunnen	*a'94 Heppenheimer Krötenbrunnen* (i.e. a wine vintage 1994)

8.1.5 *hundert, tausend, Dutzend*

(a) *hundert* and *tausend* are not declined when they are used as numerals

hundert, **zweihundert** Häuser	*a hundred, two hundred houses*
tausend Bücher, **sechstausend** Bücher	*a thousand books, six thousand books*

(b) *das Hundert, das Tausend* and *das Dutzend* are used as nouns of quantity

das zweite **Dutzend**, **Hundert**,	*the second dozen, hundred,*

Tausend	*thousand*
ein halbes **Dutzend**, ein halbes **Hundert**	*half a dozen, half a hundred* (i.e. fifty)
zwei **Dutzend** Eier	*two dozen eggs*
Hunderttausende von Menschen	hundreds of thousands of people
Die Menschen verhungerten zu **Hunderten** und **Tausenden**	*People were starving in hundreds and thousands*

(c) These words can be used to refer to an indefinite quantity

i.e. to indicate a rough approximation. In this usage, especially when they are used in the plural after quantifiers such as *einige*, *mehrere*, *viele*, etc., they can be spelled with an initial capital or small letter. They have a plural ending **if** the following phrase is introduced by *von* or is in the genitive (see **2.7.3**):

In dem Stadion warten **Tausende** / **tausende** von Menschen auf den Spielbeginn	*In the stadium thousands of people are waiting for the match to start*
Mehrere **Hundert** / **hundert** Kinder waren an Typhus gestorben	Several hundred children had died of typhus
Diesen Stoff verkauft man in einigen **Dutzend** / **dutzend** Farben	*This material is sold in a few dozen shades*

In the genitive plural, they have the ending *-er* if no determiner precedes. A following adjective has the strong endings:

inmitten Tausender/tausender fröhlicher New Yorker (*HMP*)	*in the midst of thousands of happy New Yorkers*

However, they have the ending *-e* if a preceding determiner has the genitive plural ending *-er*: *die Ersparnisse vieler Tausend **e** /tausend **e***.

> *Dutzend* does not take a plural ending when used as a measurement noun in constructions such as *drei Dutzend* (*Eier*) 'three dozen (eggs)', see **1.2.8**.

For the use of the genitive, apposition or a phrase with *von* after the nouns *Dutzend*, *Hundert*, *Tausend*, see **2.7.3**.

8.1.6 Qualification of cardinal numbers

Numerals may be modified by certain adverbs of degree

bis zu *up to*	knapp *barely*	über *over*
unter *under*	zwischen *between*	
gegen, rund, um, ungefähr, circa/zirka (*abbrev.*: ca.) *about, approximately*		

Although some of these adverbs look like prepositions which would usually be followed by a noun in the accusative or dative case, when they are used in these constructions with a following numeral they have no influence on the case of the following noun phrase:

Bis zu zehn Kinder können mitfahren	*Up to ten children can come with us*
Sie ist **zwischen 30 und 40 Jahre** alt	*She is between 30 and 40 years old*

However, when they are used as prepositions, the following noun phrase is in the accusative or dative case, as normally required by the particular preposition:

Kinder **unter sieben Jahren** zahlen die Hälfte	*Children under seven years old pay half-price*
Kinder **über sechs Jahre** zahlen voll	Children over six years old pay the full price
geeignet für Kinder **zwischen sieben und zwölf Jahren**	*suitable for children between the ages of seven and twelve*

It is quite straightforward to work out whether these words are being used as **adverbs** (when they do not influence the selection of case) or

prepositions (when they do), since in contexts where they are being used as adverbs the sentence would still be correct if they were left out: *Zehn Kinder können mitfahren.*

But if they are being used as prepositions, they cannot be omitted: **Kinder sieben Jahren zahlen die Hälfte* is not a grammatical sentence.

A few other adverbials can be used with numbers, e.g.:

Es dauert gut drei Stunden	*It lasts a good three hours*
Er gab mir **ganze** fünf Euro	*He gave me all of five euros*

8.2 Ordinal numbers

ORDINAL NUMBERS are those used as adjectives like English '(the) first, second, third', etc. The forms of ordinal numbers in German are given in **Table 8.2**, with the definite article. Most are formed by adding the **suffix** - ***te*** to the cardinals **2–19** and -***ste*** to the cardinals from ***20*** upwards, but *das erste* 'first', *das dritte* 'third' and *das siebte* 'seventh' are exceptions to this pattern. **All ordinal numbers are declined like adjectives**.

Table 8.2 The forms of the ordinal numbers

1 das erste	**20** der zwanzigste
2 das zweite	**21** der einundzwanzigste
3 das dritte	**27** der siebenundzwanzigste
4 das vierte	**30** der dreißigste
5 das fünfte	**40** der vierzigste
6 das sechste	**50** der fünfzigste
7 das siebte	**60** der sechzigste
8 das achte	**70** der siebzigste
9 das neunte	**80** der achtzigste
10 das zehnte	**90** der neunzigste
11 das elfte	**100** der hundertste

12 das zwölfte	**101** der hundert(und)erste
13 das dreizehnte	**117** der hundertsiebzehnte
14 das vierzehnte	**1000** der tausendste
15 das fünfzehnte	**1 000 000** der millionste
16 das sechzehnte	
17 das siebzehnte	
18 das achtzehnte	
19 das neunzehnte	
5437 das fünftausendvierhundertsiebenunddreißigste	

(a) Ordinal numbers are indicated in writing by using a full stop after the numeral

am **14.** Mai das **275.** Regiment die **12.** Klasse

This is the only usual means of indicating ordinal numbers in writing, as abbreviations, e.g. *am 5* ***ten*** *Mai*, are no longer used.

(b) Ordinal numbers can be used as nouns

They are then written with initial capitals like other adjectives used as nouns:

jeder **Dritte** Er kam als **Erster** Wer ist der **Zweite** ?

As with other adjectives, a small initial letter is used if the noun is understood, e.g. *Anke war die erste Frau in unserem Kreis, aber wer war die zweite?* (see **6.2.1**).

(c) Equivalents for English 'to be the first to'

For 'to be the first to', German uses either ***als Erster***, or ***der Erste*** followed by a relative clause:

Die Russen **waren die Ersten**, die einen künstlichen Erdsatelliten um den Globus schickten; sie brachten **als Erste** einen Menschen in den Weltraum (*Zeit*)	*The Russians were the first to send an artificial satellite around the earth; they were the first to put a man into space*
Dann musste Konstantin **als Erster** über den Graben (*Dönhoff*)	*Then Konstantin had to be the first to cross the ditch*

(d) The form *der wievielte* is used to enquire about numbers

Das **wievielte** Kind ist das jetzt? *How many children is that now?*

Den **Wievielten** haben wir heute? *What's the date today?*

Zum **wievielten** Mal bist du schon hier? *How many times have you been here?*

(e) Equivalents for English 'first(ly)', 'secondly', etc.

For these adverbial numerals, German uses the stem of the ordinal with the suffix ***-ens***, e.g.:

erstens first(ly), *zweitens* secondly, *drittens* thirdly, etc.

Alternatively, the forms *zum Ersten, zum Zweiten, zum Dritten*, etc. are used.

(f) Ordinal numbers can be compounded with superlatives

die **zweitbest** e Arbeit die **drittgrößt** e Stadt der **vierthöchst** e Berg

(g) *der x-te* and *der zigste* are used as indefinite ordinals

i.e. as equivalents of English 'the umpteenth', e.g.:

> *Das war mein* **x-ter** / **zigster** Versuch

x-te is pronounced [ɪkst ə]. For the form *zig*, see **8.1.21**.

8.3 Fractions and decimals

8.3.1 Usage with fractions (*die Bruchzahlen*) and decimals

(a) The form of fractions

Fractions in German are neuter nouns formed by **adding - *el* to the ordinal stem**:

> ein Drittel ein Viertel ein Fünftel ein Achtel ein Zehntel

They have no ending in the plural, e.g. *zwei Drittel*. The ending - *n* is optional in the dative plural:

> Die Prüfung wurde von **vier Fünftel(n)** der Schüler bestanden

If a fraction in the dative is followed by a phrase in the genitive, it sometimes lacks the expected ending, although it is more usually included:

> in einem Drittel der Fälle (*less common*: in ein Drittel der Fälle)

When used with full integers, fractions are read out as written, with no *und*:

3⅝ *drei fünfachtel* 17/10 *eins siebenzehntel*

(b) Verb agreement with fractions

If a fraction is the subject of a verb, then it takes a singular or plural ending as appropriate, see **10.1.4**:

Ein Drittel **ist** schon verkauft Zwei Drittel **sind** schon verkauft

However, in everyday speech the verb is often in the singular, e.g. *Zwei Drittel der Mannschaft wird vermisst*, although correct usage prefers the plural, especially in writing: *Zwei Drittel der Mannschaft werden vermisst.*

(c) The spelling of fractions

(i) When fractions are followed by a noun of measurement they are spelled with a small letter, and an accompanying indefinite article takes its case and gender from the noun:

mit einer **drittel** Flasche mit einem **viertel** Liter

(ii) Fractions can be written together with measurement words, e.g. *ein Viertelliter*, *fünf Achtelliter*, *vier Zehntelgramm* and (especially) *eine Viertelstunde*. The following alternatives are thus all acceptable:

Er verfehlte den Rekord um **drei Zehntel einer Sekunde**

Er verfehlte den Rekord um **drei zehntel Sekunden**

Er verfehlte den Rekord um **drei Zehntelsekunden**

(iii) ***drei Viertel*** can be used in the same way, as a noun phrase: *der Topf ist zu drei Vierteln voll*, or, with a small letter, as an adverb: *der Topf ist drei viertel voll.*

It can be compounded with *Stunde*, e.g. *in einer Dreiviertelstunde* 'in three-quarters of an hour', or, alternatively: *in drei Viertelstunden.*

(d) Decimals

In German, decimals are written with a comma, NOT with a point, e.g.:

0,7 nullkommasieben	4,75 vierkommasiebenfünf
1,25 einskommazweifünf	109,1 hundertneunkommaeins
3,426 dreikommavierzweisechs	

In everyday usage, two places of decimals are frequently read out in terms of tens and units, e.g. *4,75 vierkommafünfundsiebzig.*

8.3.2 'half'

English 'half' can correspond to **the adjective *halb*** or **the noun *die Hälfte***, which are used as follows:

(a) 'half', used as a noun, is normally *die Hälfte*

Er hat mir nur **die Hälfte** gegeben *He only gave me half*

die größere **Hälfte** *the bigger half*

However, the form *das Halb*, from the adjective, is used to refer to the number as such:

(Ein) **Halb** ist mehr als ein Drittel *Half is more than a third*

(b) The usual equivalent of 'half a' is the indefinite article *ein* with the adjective *halb*

Ich aß einen **halben** Apfel *I ate half an apple*

ein **halbes** Dutzend *half a dozen*

ein **halbes** Brot *half a loaf*

(c) 'half the/this/my'

The most usual equivalent is the noun *die Hälfte* with a following genitive, but the appropriate determiner can be used with *halb* if the reference is to a whole thing which can be divided cleanly in two:

Die Hälfte der/dieser Äpfel ist schlecht *Half the/these apples are bad*

die Hälfte meines Geldes half my money

Ich aß **die Hälfte des Kuchens** / Ich aß **den halben Kuchen** } *I ate half the cake*

In colloquial speech *halb* is sometimes used with a plural noun in this meaning, e.g. *die halben Äpfel* 'half the apples'. However, this is not accepted as standard.

(d) English adverbial 'half' corresponds to German *halb*

halb angezogen *half dressed*

Er weiß alles nur **halb** *He only half knows things*

(e) German equivalents for English 'one and a half'

For 'one and a half' German can use either ***eineinhalb*** or (in more informal usage) ***anderthalb***.

'two and a half', 'three and a half', etc. are ***zweieinhalb***, ***dreieinhalb***, etc. They never have any endings:

Bis Walldürn sind es noch **eineinhalb/anderthalb** Stunden	*It's another hour and a half to Walldürn*
Sie wollte noch **sechseinhalb** Monate bleiben	*She wanted to stay another six and a half months*

(f) Other phrases and idioms with 'half':

Er hatte **halb so viel** wie ich	*He had half as much as me*
Kinder fahren **zum halben Preis**	Children travel half price
Er ist mir **auf halbem Wege** entgegengekommen	*He met me halfway* (literally and figuratively)
Ich nehme noch **ein Halbes**	*I'll have another half*
Das ist **nichts Halbes** und nichts Ganzes	That's neither flesh nor fowl
Die Besucher waren **zur Hälfte** Deutsche	Half the visitors were German
nach der ersten **Halbzeit**	*after the first half* (sport)
halb Europa, **halb** München (see **6.1.3g**)	*half Europe, half Munich*

8.4 Other numerical usages

8.4.1 Numerically equal distribution

i.e. '**each**' of two or more receiving the same. This is expressed by ***je***:

Ich gab den Jungen **je** zehn Euro	*I gave each of the boys/each boy ten euros*
A. und B. wurden zu **je** drei Jahren	

verurteilt Sie erhielten **je** fünf Kilo Reis	A and B were each sentenced to three years *They each received five kilograms of rice*

8.4.2 Multiples

(a) To form multiples, *-fach* is suffixed to the cardinal number

e.g. *einfach* 'single', *zweifach* 'twofold', *dreifach* 'threefold', etc.:

eine **einfach** e Karte	*a single ticket*
ein **vierfach** er Olympiasieger	a four-time gold-medal winner
Die Grundstückspreise stiegen zunächst aufs **Zehnfach** e (*Böll*)	*The price of land first went up tenfold*

- *fach* can also be suffixed to some indefinites, e.g. *vielfach* or *mehrfach* 'manifold', 'frequent(ly)', 'repeatedly', *mannigfach* 'varied', 'manifold'.

The variant form *zwiefach* for *zweifach* is still occasionally used, but sounds rather old-fashioned.

(b) The suffix *-fältig*

e.g. *zweifältig*, *dreifältig*, *vielfältig*, etc. These can be used as multiples, but they are rather less common than forms in *-fach*.

A couple of forms lack *Umlaut*, i.e. *mannigfaltig* 'diverse' (which is more frequent than *mannigfach* with the same meaning), and *die (heilige) Dreifaltigkeit* 'the (Holy) Trinity'.

einfältig is most often used with the figurative meaning 'simple(-minded)'.

(c) ‘double’

For English ‘double’, German can use ***zweifach*** and ***doppelt***. They are sometimes interchangeable, but ***zweifach*** usually refers to **two different things** (corresponding to English ‘two-fold’), while ***doppelt*** refers to **two of the same**, e.g.:

der **zweifache** Etappensieger bei der Tour de France	*the two-fold stage-winner in the Tour de France*
Er ist verheiratet und **zweifacher** Vater erwachsener Töchter	He is married and the father of two grown-up daughters
Der Koffer hat einen **doppelten** Boden	*The suitcase has a double bottom*

(d) ‘single’

In the sense ‘individual’, ‘separate’, the equivalent of English *single* is *einzeln*:

Die Bände werden **einzeln** verkauft	*The volumes are sold singly/ separately*

In the sense ‘sole’, the equivalent is *einzig*:

Er hat keinen **einzigen** Freund	*He hasn’t got a single friend*

(e) The suffix *-erlei*

- *erle* **i** is added to the cardinal numbers to give forms which mean ‘x kinds of’, e.g. ***zweierlei*** ‘two kinds of’, ***dreierlei*** ‘three kinds of’, ***vielerlei*** ‘many kinds of’, etc. They can be used as nouns or adjectives and do not decline:

Ich ziehe **zweierlei** Bohnen	*I grow two kinds of beans*
Er hat **hunderterlei** Pläne	He’s got hundreds of different plans

Ich habe ihm **dreierlei** vorgeschlagen	*I suggested three different things to him*

einerlei is most often used in the sense 'all the same' (i.e. = *egal*, *gleich*, etc.), e.g. *Das ist mir alles einerlei.*

8.4.3 Forms in *-mal(s)*

(a) Adverbs expressing a number of occasions are formed by adding *-mal* to the cardinals

einmal once	*zweimal* twice	*dreimal* three times	*zehnmal* ten times
hundertmal a hundred times	*x-mal, zigmal* umpteen times		*dutzendmal* a dozen times

Ich habe ihn diese Woche **dreimal** gesehen	*I've seen him three times this week*
Ich habe es **hundertmal** bereut	I've regretted it a hundred times
Also, Herr Ober, **zweimal** Gulasch, bitte	Right, waiter, goulash for two, please
anderthalbmal so groß wie der andere Luftballon	*half as big again as the other balloon*

If particular emphasis is needed, the cardinal and the noun *Mal* 'times' can be written separately, e.g. *neun Mal!* '**nine** times!'

(b) Adjectives are formed from these adverbs by suffixing *-ig*

(see **20.3.1d**), e.g. *einmalig*, *zweimalig*:

eine **einmalige** Gelegenheit	*a unique opportunity*
nach **dreimaligem** Durchlesen	*after reading his letter three times*

seines Briefes

mehrmalig 'repeated' is formed in a similar way.

(c) Forms and phrases with *-mal* and *Mal*

(i) ***das Mal*** (plural *die Male*) is a neuter noun, and it is normally written separately from any preceding adjectives or determiners, with an initial capital letter:

das erste **Mal**, als ich ihn sah
kein einziges **Mal**
Ich werde es nächstes **Mal** tun
Zum wievielten **Mal bist du hier** ?
Jedes **Mal** bist du zu spät gekommen
Beide **Male** bin ich durchgefallen
Ich habe ihn oft besucht; das eine **Mal** zeigte er mir seine Sammlung
Dieses **Mal** wird sie mich anders behandeln müssen
Die letzten paar **Male** war sie nicht zu Hause

Das letzte **Mal** war das schönste
ein um das andere **Mal** *time after time*
Das vorige **Mal** war es schöner
Beim vorletzten **Mal** war sie schwer krank
Er war nur ein paar **Mal** dort gewesen
viele (hundert) **Male**

(ii) The form *-mal* can be compounded in a few instances:

diesmal *this time* | **dutzendmal** *a dozen times* | **keinmal** *on no occasion* | **manchmal** *sometimes*

ein **paarmal** *a few times* | ein **andermal** *another time* | **x-mal** *lots of times*

Compounds like these have been restricted by the recent spelling

reform and only those given above are now accepted. Some others which had been usual, like *jedesmal* and *zum erstenmal*, are no longer possible and have been replaced by the full phrases, with each word written separately, as shown in **(i)** above.

(iii) *mal* (with a small initial letter) is used to express multiplication, for English 'times' (see **8.4.5**), e.g.:

sieben **mal** vier ist achtundzwanzig	*seven times four is twenty-eight*

(d) Forms in *-mals*

The suffix ***-mals*** is used to form a few adverbs to indicate 'time(s)', i.e. ***erstmals*** 'for the first time', **mehrmals** 'repeatedly' and ***vielmals*** 'many times'.

Ich danke Ihnen **vielmals** Danke **vielmals**	*Many thanks*
Ich bitte **vielmals** um Entschuldigung	*I do apologize*
Sie lässt Sie **vielmals** grüßen	*She sends you her kindest regards*
Nachdem der Horst jahrelang unbenutzt war, hatten **erstmals** im Jahr 2011 zwei Störche Quartier bezogen (*BrZ*)	*After the nest had not been used for years two storks moved in for the first time in 2011*
Der russische Präsident hatte bereits **mehrmals** in die Ukraine reisen wollen (*SGT*)	*The Russian President had already wanted to travel to Ukraine on many occasions*

8.4.4 Mathematical expressions

The common arithmetic and mathematical functions are expressed as follows in German. Some of the symbols used in the German-speaking countries are rather different from those current in English-speaking countries:

4 + 5 = 9	vier und/plus fünf ist/macht/gleich neun
8 − 6 = 2	acht weniger/minus sechs ist/gleich zwei

$3 \times 4 = 12$	}	drei mal vier ist/gleich zwölf
$3 \cdot 4 = 12$		
$8 : 2 = 4$		acht (geteilt) durch zwei ist/gleich vier
$3^2 = 9$		drei hoch zwei (drei zum Quadrat) ist/gleich neun
$3^3 = 27$		drei hoch drei ist/gleich siebenundzwanzig
$\sqrt{9} = 3$		Quadratwurzel/zweite Wurzel aus neun ist/gleich drei
$5 > 3$		fünf ist größer als drei

8.5 Times and dates

8.5.1 Clock times

(a) In everyday speech the twelve-hour clock is the norm for giving the time

When reference is not being made to public events, official timetables and the like, the twelve-hour clock is used in everyday conversation in German, as in English. The forms are given in **Table 8.3**.

Table 8.3 Clock times

1.00	Es ist ein Uhr/Es ist eins	*It's one (o'clock)*
3.00	Es ist drei (Uhr)	It's three (o'clock)
3.05	fünf (Minuten) nach drei	five (minutes) past three
3.07	sieben Minuten nach	seven minutes past three
3.10		
3.15		

3.20	drei	ten (minutes) past three
3.25	zehn (Minuten) nach drei	quarter past three
3.30	Viertel nach drei/viertel vier (S. and E. Germany)	twenty past three
3.35	zwanzig nach drei/zehn vor halb vier	twenty-five past three
3.40	fünf vor halb vier	half past three/half three
3.45	halb vier	twenty-five to four
3.47	fünf nach halb vier	twenty to four
3.50	zwanzig vor vier/zehn nach halb vier	quarter to four
3.55	Viertel vor vier/ dreiviertel vier (S. and E. Germany)	thirteen minutes to four
	dreizehn Minuten vor vier	ten (minutes) to four
	zehn (Minuten) vor vier	*five (minutes) to four*
	fünf (Minuten) vor vier	

(b) In official contexts the twenty-four-hour clock is used

This is the norm in timetables, for television and radio programmes, theatrical performances, official meetings, business hours, and in all other official contexts. There is thus no equivalent in German for English *a.m.* and *p.m.* Examples are given in **Table 8.4**.

Table 8.4 The twenty-four-hour clock

0.27	**null Uhr siebenundzwanzig**	*12.27 a.m.*
5.15	fünf Uhr fünfzehn	5.15 a.m.
10.30	zehn Uhr dreißig	10.30 a.m.
13.07	dreizehn Uhr sieben	1.07 p.m.
21.37		9.37 p.m.

24.00	einundzwanzig Uhr siebenunddreißig **vierundzwanzig Uhr**	*12.00 midnight*

When these forms are spoken, the word *Uhr* is only omitted in giving the full hours between 1 a.m. and noon, e.g. *Ihr Zug kommt um 9.00 an* (spoken: *um neun (Uhr)*).

Otherwise the full forms, with *Uhr*, are used, e.g. *Die Vorstellung beginnt um 20.00* (spoken: *um zwanzig Uhr*), *um 20.15* (*um zwanzig Uhr fünfzehn*), *Der Zug fährt um 9.17* (*um neun Uhr siebzehn*), etc.

Even in everyday conversation it is common for 'official' times to be given using the twenty-four-hour clock. Thus one would say *Mein Zug fährt um 19.35* (*um neunzehn Uhr fünfunddreißig*), but it would be odd to say *Tante Käthe hat uns für fünfzehn Uhr dreißig zum Kaffee eingeladen* – you would say *halb vier*.

(c) Further phrases with clock times

Wie viel Uhr ist es? Wie spät ist es? (*coll.*)	}	*What's the time?*
Wie viel Uhr haben Sie?	*What time do you make it?*	
Um wie viel Uhr kommt sie?	What time is she coming?	
Sie kommt um halb drei	She's coming at half past two	
um drei Uhr nachts	at three in the morning	
um neun Uhr vormittags	at nine in the morning	
um zwölf Uhr mittags	at twelve noon	
um drei Uhr nachmittags	at three in the afternoon	
um sieben Uhr abends	at seven in the evening	
um Mitternacht	at midnight	
	It is exactly nine	

Es ist Punkt/genau neun (Uhr)	(o'clock)
Es ist gerade halb	It is just half past
Es ist ungefähr neun (Uhr)	It's about nine (o'clock)
Es ist (schon) neun Uhr vorbei	It's gone nine o'clock
Er kommt ungefähr um neun Uhr	He's coming at about nine o'clock
Er kam gegen neun (Uhr) an	*He came at about nine/ just before nine*

As the last example shows, ***gegen*** can be ambiguous with clock times, see **18.1.4g**.

8.5.2 Days and months

(a) The days of the week

Table 8.5 Days of the week

Sonntag	*Sunday*	**Donnerstag**	*Thursday*
Montag	*Monday*	**Freitag**	*Friday*
Dienstag	*Tuesday*	**Samstag**	*Saturday*
Mittwoch	*Wednesday*	**Sonnabend**	

As the equivalent for 'Saturday', *Samstag* was originally restricted to South Germany and *Sonnabend* was preferred in the North (i.e. north of Frankfurt am Main). However, *Samstag* has recently come to be used much more widely at the expense of *Sonnabend*, which is now used only in the far north and in East Germany.

For English 'on Sunday', etc. German uses *am Sonntag*, etc., see **4.5c** and **18.3.2b**.

(b) The months

Table 8.6 The months

Januar	*January*	**Mai**	*May*	**September**	*September*
Februar	*February*	**Juni**	*June*	**Oktober**	*October*
März	*March*	**Juli**	*July*	**November**	*November*
April	*April*	**August**	*August*	**Dezember**	*December*

(i) In Austria, *Jänner* is always used for *Januar*, and, less commonly, *Feber* for *Februar*.
(ii) *Juni* and *Juli* are sometimes pronounced *Jun* ***o*** and *Jul* ***ei*** to avoid confusion, especially on the telephone.
(iii) For English 'in January', etc., German has ***im*** *Januar*, etc., see **4.5a** and **18.3.7b**.

(c) The major public holidays and religious festivals

Neujahr(stag)	*New Year's Day*
Heilige Drei Könige	Epiphany
Rosenmontag	*Carnival Monday* (the day before
Aschermittwoch	Shrove Tuesday)
Gründonnerstag	*Ash Wednesday*
Karfreitag	Maundy Thursday
Ostersonntag	Good Friday
Ostern	Easter Sunday
Ostermontag	Easter
Maifeiertag	Easter Monday
Fronleichnam	*May Day/Labour Day* (1st May)
Pfingsten	*Corpus Christi*
Pfingstsonntag	Whitsun
Pfingstmontag	Whit Sunday
	Whit Monday
(Christi) Himmelfahrt	*Ascension Day*
Mariä Himmelfahrt	*Assumption of the Virgin Mary*
Tag der Deutschen Einheit	(15th August)
Allerheiligen	*Day of German Unity* (3rd October)

Buß-und Bettag	*All Saints' Day* (1st November)
Mariä Empfängnis	*Day of Penitence and Prayer*
der Heilige Abend *or* Heiligabend	(Wednesday preceding the last
Weihnachten	Sunday before Advent)
Erster Weihnachts(feier)tag	*Immaculate Conception* (8th
Zweiter Weihnachts(feier)tag	December)
Stephanitag/Stephanstag	*Christmas Eve*
Silvester	Christmas
	Christmas Day
	Boxing Day
	New Year's Eve

(i) *Ostern*, *Pfingsten* and *Weihnachten* are usually treated as neuter singulars, see **1.2.7b**.
(ii) Not all of these are official public holidays throughout the German-speaking countries. There is much variation between individual *Länder* in Germany and Austria, and the Swiss cantons, and there are many additional local holidays.

8.5.3 Dates

(a) Ordinal numbers are used for the days of the month

e.g. *der fünfte April* 'the fifth of April'. In writing, they are only ever given with figures, never with words:

Der Wievielte ist heute?	}	*What's the date today?*
Den Wievielten haben wir heute?		
Heute ist der 8. (*spoken:* achte) Mai	}	*Today is the eighth of May*
Wir haben heute den 8. (achten) Mai		
Er kam am 5. (fünften)	*He came on the fifth of*	

Juni, 2014/ am 5.6.2014 (am fünften, sechsten, zweitausendvierzehn)	*June 2014/ on 5.6.2014*

As the last example shows, the day is given **before** the month in German. This corresponds to usage in British English, but it is the reverse of American practice.

(b) Usage with dates including the day of the week

i.e. equivalents of 'Monday, the fifth of June'. There are three alternative equally current ways of expressing this in German:

(i) with the day of the week and the date in the accusative case:

Wir fliegen **Montag**, **den** 5. **Juni** (,) nach Australien

(ii) with the day of the week preceded by *am*, followed by the date in the accusative case:

Wir fliegen **am Montag**, **den** 5. **Juni** (,) nach Australien

(iii) with the day of the week preceded by *am*, followed by the date in the dative case:

Wir fliegen **am Montag**, **dem** 5. **Juni** (,) nach Australien

(c) Letter headings

In private correspondence (i.e. where the address is not printed on the notepaper), the writer's address is not usually written out in full at the head of the letter, as is the common British or American practice. Instead, just the town is given, followed by the date, which may be written in various ways, i.e.:

Siegen, **(den)** 5.6.15	Siegen, **am** 5.6.15

Siegen, **(den/d.) 5. Juni 2015** Siegen, **im Juni 2015**

When writing a formal letter to an unknown person, especially for the first time, some Germans put their full name and address in the top left-hand corner of the letter and the town and date, as given above, in the top right-hand corner.

8.6 Addresses

The format recommended by the German and Austrian postal services is as in the examples below:

Herrn
Dr. Ulrich Sievers
Sichelstraße 17
54290 Trier

Familie
Karl (und Ute) Schulz
Königsberger Straße 36
64711 Erbach/Odw.

Firma
Eugen Spengel
Rossgasse 7–9
07973 Greiz

(Herrn und Frau)
Peter und Eva Specht
Steinweg 2½
35037 Marburg/Lahn

An das
Katasteramt Westfalen
Bismarckallee 87
48151 Münster

Frau
Maria Jellinek
Maximiliansgasse 34
1084 Wien

Herrn
Beat Wernli
Gerechtigkeitsgasse 24
3011 Bern

Monsieur Alain Dubois
rue Napoléon 17
94320 THIAIS
FRANKREICH

Mr & Mrs Frank Johnson
27 Corsland Ave
GUILDFORD
GROßBRITANNIEN
GU3 4AY

Mr. Albert McEvoy
30987 – 31st Street SW.
CALGARY
CANADA
T3C 1E5

Contrary to previous practice, no blank line is left above the name of the postal town or city. The postcode is regarded as essential. For post to other countries, the name of the town and the name of the country should be written in capitals below the street name. Prefixed country codes, e.g. **A** -1084 Wien, **CH** -3011 Bern, **D** -48151 Münster, **F** -94320 Thiais should no longer be used (although, in practice, many people still do).

Even in private correspondence it is now recommended that the sender's name and address should be given, in the same format, in the top left-hand corner of the front of the envelope, not on the back, as was traditional practice.

Modal particles

MODAL PARTICLES are words which express the speaker's attitude to what is being said.

They are words like **aber**, **doch**, **ja**, **mal**, **schon**, and the others shown in **Table 9.1** which alter the tone of what is being said and make sure that the speaker's intentions and attitudes are clearly understood. They typically

- appeal for agreement
- express surprise or annoyance
- tone down a blunt question or statement
- sound reassuring

Table 9.1 German modal particles

aber	9.1.1	**eigentlich**	9.1.10	**ja**	9.1.19	**schließlich**	9.1.28
allerdings	9.1.2	**einfach**	9.1.11	**jedenfalls**	9.1.20	**schon**	9.1.29
also	9.1.3	**erst**	9.1.12	**lediglich**	9.1.21	**sowieso**	9.1.30
auch	9.1.4	**etwa**	9.1.13	**mal**	9.1.22	**überhaupt**	9.1.31
bloß	9.1.5	**freilich**	9.1.14	**noch**	9.1.23	**übrigens**	9.1.32
denn	9.1.6	**gar**	9.1.15	**nun**	9.1.24	**vielleicht**	9.1.33
doch	9.1.7	**gleich**	9.1.16	**nur**	9.1.25	**wohl**	9.1.34
eben	9.1.8	**halt**	9.1.17	**ohnehin**	9.1.26	**zwar**	9.1.35
eh	9.1.9	**immerhin**	9.1.18	**ruhig**	9.1.27		

There is no complete agreement as to which words in German should be classified as 'modal particles' (called *Abtönungspartikeln* or *Modalpartikeln* in German). Their function is similar to that of adverbs of attitude (see **7.4.2**), and like them **they can never be negated**. In

general, though, they are less independent and **they cannot usually occur in first position in a main clause**, before the main verb.

English has very few words like this and tends to express an attitude to what is being said in other ways, especially by means of intonation and tag questions like 'isn't it?' Because of this, learning to use modal particles idiomatically needs attention and practice, since they are a very characteristic feature of spoken German.

The sections in this chapter try to give some idea of the flavour of all the German modal particles, by giving hints and indications of approximate equivalents in the translations of examples. However, these can only be a rough guide to usage and the equivalents should be understood in this sense, not as practical translation equivalents. Special attention needs to be paid to those particles identified as 'downtoners' because there is a very clear tendency for German to use downtoners much more extensively than English.

Typical modal particles relate to the clause or sentence as a whole, but there is another group of particles, the so-called **scalar** or **focus particles** (called *Gradpartikeln* or *Fokuspartikeln* in German), like ***sogar***, which focus attention on a particular word or phrase (usually immediately before or after the particle). These can correspond to words like *even*, but English also uses a so-called 'cleft sentence' (see **19.2.3a**) to focus attention on a particular word or phrase, e.g. *Dieses Mal war* **der Mann aber** schuld'This time **it was the man who** was to blame'. The examples in the sections below show typical instances of this.

A major difficulty in identifying types of particle and explaining how they are used is that distinctions between them are not always clear-cut, and many of the words dealt with in this chapter can be used in more than one way. ***auch*** and ***nur***, for example, are used both as modal and as focus particles; very many, like ***eigentlich*** and ***vielleicht***, are used as adverbs of attitude as well as modal particles, and some, like ***aber***, are also used as conjunctions. As differentiating between these categories is not always straightforward, it is most practical to deal here with all uses of all the words which could be considered 'modal particles'. They are listed in **Table 9.1**, with an indication of the section

where they are treated.

9.1 German modal particles

9.1.1 *aber*

(a) In STATEMENTS, *aber* expresses a surprised reaction

In effect, *aber* makes these statements into exclamations:

Das war aber eine Reise!	*That was quite a journey, wasn't it?*
Der Film war aber gut!	The film was good
Der Kaffee ist aber heiß!	*Oh! The coffee is hot*

aber can be given even greater emphasis by adding *auch*. Compare:

Das war aber auch eine Reise!	*That really was some journey!*

ja is also used to express surprise (see **9.1.19b**), but surprise resulting from a difference in kind, where *aber* indicates a difference in degree. Compare:

Der Kaffee ist **aber** heiß (i.e. hotter than you had expected)

Der Kaffee ist **ja** heiß (you had expected cold coffee?)

In this sense, *aber* is very similar in force to *vielleicht* (see **9.1.33a**): *Der Tee ist vielleicht heiß!*

(b) Within a CLAUSE *aber* expresses a contradiction

In contexts like this, *aber* has much the same meaning as it would have

at the beginning of the clause (i.e. = English 'but', see **17.1.1**). This sense is quite close to that of *doch* (see **9.1.7a**), or *though* in English:

Mein Freund kam aber nicht	*My friend didn't come, though*
Sie muss uns aber gesehen haben	But she must have seen us
Jetzt kannst du etwas schneller fahren … Pass aber bei den Ampeln auf!	*You can go a bit quicker now … Watch out at the lights, though!*
Dieses Mal war aber der **Mann** schuld	*This time it was the man who was to blame, though*

As the last example shows, *aber* can focus attention on a following noun, and this often has the same effect as using a cleft sentence in English.

Used with *oder*, *aber* has the sense of 'on the other hand':

Wir jungen Leute konnten uns sportlich betätigen oder aber auch nur gemütlich zusammensitzen (*SGT*)	*We young people could play sport or on the other hand just sit round and relax*

(c) Used initially in EXCLAMATIONS, *aber* stresses the speaker's opinion

aber can sound scolding or reassuring, depending on the context:

Hast du was dagegen? Aber nein!	*Have you any objection? Of course not!*
Aber Kinder! Was habt ihr schon wieder angestellt?	Now, now, childen! What have you been up to?
Aber, aber! Was soll diese Aufregung?	*Oh now! What's all the excitement about?*

(d) *aber* is also used as a coordinating conjunction

i.e. corresponding to English 'but', see **17.1.1**.

9.1.2 *allerdings*

allerdings most often **expresses a reservation** about what has just been said. It usually corresponds to English 'admittedly', 'of course', 'to be sure', 'all the same', etc. *freilich* has a very similar meaning, see **9.1.14**.

(a) Within a CLAUSE, the sense of *allerdings* is close to that of aber

(see **9.1.1b**) It also expresses a **contradiction**, but it is a little less blunt:

Es ist ein gutes Buch, allerdings gefallen mir seine anderen etwas besser	*It's a good book. Even so, I like his others rather better*
Wir haben uns im Urlaub gut erholt, das Wetter war allerdings nicht sehr gut	The holiday was a good rest for us. All the same, the weather wasn't very good
Ich komme gern, allerdings muss ich zuerst der Rita Bescheid sagen	*I want to come, of course I'll have to tell Rita first*

(b) In ANSWER TO A QUESTION, *allerdings* expresses a strongly affirmative answer

There is typically the hint of a reservation of some kind which the speaker isn't saying out loud:

Kennst du die Angelika? Allerdings! *Do you know Angelika? Oh yes!* (*I*

Ist der Helmut schon da?	*know what she's like, too!*)
Allerdings!	*Is Helmut here yet? Oh, yes!* (*and you should see who he's come with!*)

9.1.3 *also*

(a) WITHIN A CLAUSE *also* requests confirmation of what the other person has just said

In this way, *also* typically corresponds to English 'so', 'thus' or 'then':

Du wirst mir also helfen können	*You're going to be able to help me, then*
Wann kommst du also genau?	So, when are you coming precisely?
Sie meinen also, dass wir uns heute entscheiden müssen	*So you think we're going to have to make a decision today*

(b) IN ISOLATION, *also* links up with what has just been said

also can introduce a statement, a question or an exclamation:

Also, jetzt müssen wir uns überlegen, wie wir dahinkommen	*Well then, now we've got to think about how we're going to get there*
Also, besuchst du uns morgen?	So, are you going to come to see us tomorrow?
Also, gut!	Well all right then!
Also, so was!	*Well I never!*

9.1.4 *auch*

(a) In STATEMENTS, *auch* stresses the reasons why something is or is not the case

auch can correct a false impression and is often used with *ja*:

Gerhard sieht heute schlecht aus – Er ist (ja) auch lange krank gewesen	*Gerhard's not looking well today – Well, he's been ill for a long time*
Jetzt möchte ich schlafen gehen – Es ist (ja) auch spät	I'd like to go to bed now – Well, after all, it is late
Das hättest du nicht tun sollen – Ich habe es (ja) auch nicht getan	*You ought not to have done that – But I didn't do it, you know*

(b) In YES/NO QUESTIONS, *auch* asks for confirmation

The speaker thinks something should be taken for granted and is making sure this is clear. English often uses a tag question in these situations:

Kann ich mich auch darauf verlassen?	*I can rely on that, can't I?*
Hast du auch die Rechnung bezahlt?	You did pay the bill, didn't you?
Bist du auch glücklich mit ihm?	*You're happy with him, aren't you?*

(c) *auch* turns W-QUESTIONS into rhetorical questions

auch is used to confirm that nothing else could be expected:

Was kann man auch dazu sagen?	*Well, what can you say to that?*
Ich bin heute sehr müde – Warum gehst du auch immer so spät ins Bett?	*I'm very tired today – Well, why do you always go to bed so late?*

Questions like these can be turned into exclamations which emphasize the speaker's negative attitude:

Was war das auch für ein Erfolg?!	*Well, what sort of success do you call that?!*
Wie konnte er auch so schnell abreisen?!	*How could he have left as quickly as that?!*

(d) *auch* reinforces COMMANDS

This is similar to English 'Be/Make sure … !':

Bring mir eine Zeitung und vergiss es auch nicht!	*Bring me a paper and be sure you don't forget!*
Sei auch schön brav!	*Be sure you behave!*

(e) Other uses of *auch*

(i) Before a noun *auch* has the force of English 'even'. It is an alternative to *sogar* or *selbst* as a focus particle:

Auch der beste Arzt hätte ihr nicht helfen können	*Even the best doctor wouldn't have been able to help her*
Auch der Manfred kann sich ab und zu mal irren	Even Manfred can be wrong now and again
Und wenn auch!	*even so, no matter*

Note that the usual equivalent for English 'not even' is *nicht einmal.*

(ii) As an adverb, *auch* means 'too', 'also', 'as well':

Peter will auch mit	*Peter wants to come too*
Gisela ist auch nett	Gisela's nice as well

In Potsdam sind wir auch gewesen	*We also went to Potsdam*

(iii) The combination *auch nur* expresses a restriction. It corresponds to English 'even', 'as/so little/much as', etc.:

wenn ich auch nur zwei Freunde hätte	*if I only had just two friends*
ohne auch nur zu fragen	without even so much as asking
Es war unmöglich, auch nur Brot zu kaufen	*You couldn't buy so much as a loaf of bread*

(iv) *oder auch* has the sense 'or else', 'or even':

Du kannst Birnen kaufen oder auch Pfirsiche	*You can buy pears or else peaches*

(v) *auch nicht*, *auch kein* and *auch nichts* are often used for 'nor', 'neither', etc.:

Ich habe nichts davon gewusst – Ich auch nicht	*I didn't know anything about it – Nor me/Neither did I*
Sie kann nicht nähen, und stricken kann sie auch nicht	She can't sew, and neither can she knit
Das wird ihm auch nichts helfen	That won't help him either
Er liest keine Zeitungen und auch keine Bücher	*He doesn't read any newspapers or books*

See **17.1.3d** for more details on the German equivalents of 'neither' and 'nor'.

(vi) *auch* is also used in all kinds of concessive constructions where its meaning is similar to that of English 'ever', e.g. *Wer es auch sein mag* 'Whoever that may be'. For more details see **17.6.2**.

9.1.5 *bloß*

bloß usually has a restrictive sense (= English 'only', 'simply', 'merely'). It is a rather less formal alternative to *nur* – see **9.1.25**, where the uses of *nur* and *bloß* are compared:

Störe mich bloß nicht bei der Arbeit	*You'd better not disturb me while I'm working*
Wie spät ist es bloß?	I wonder just what the time is?
Wenn er bloß bald käme!	If only he would come soon!
Sie hatte bloß 100 Euro bei sich	She only had 100 euros on her
Sollen wir Tante Mia einladen? – Bloß nicht!	*Shall we invite aunt Mia? – No way!*

9.1.6 *denn*

(a) As a modal particle, *denn* is only used in QUESTIONS

(i) *denn* most often tones down the question, referring back to what has just been said, or to the general context, and it makes the question sound less blunt and more obliging. **In *w* -questions it is almost automatic in speech**:

Hast du denn die Renate gesehen?	*Tell me, have you seen Renate?*
Geht der Junge denn heute nicht in die Schule?	Isn't the boy going to school today, then?
Ach, der Bus hält. Sind wir denn schon da?	Oh, the bus is stopping. Are we already there, then?
Warum muss er denn in die Stadt?	Tell me, why has he got to go to town?
Wie bist denn du gekommen?	Tell me, how did you get here?
Wie geht es dir denn?	*How are you then?*

In rapid colloquial speech, *denn* is often reduced to' *n* and suffixed to the verb, e.g. *Hast'n du die Renate gesehen? Wie bist'n du gekommen?*

(ii) If there is a negative element in the question, *denn* signals reproach. The negative element may not be explicit, and the question itself expects a justification rather than an answer:

Hast du denn keinen Führerschein?	*Come on, haven't you got a driving licence?*
Bist du denn blind?	Come on now, are you blind?
Wo bist du denn so lange geblieben?	Where on earth have you been all this time?
Was ist denn hier los?	*What on earth's going on here?*

(iii) *denn* can convert *w* -questions into rhetorical questions, expecting a negative answer:

Wer redet denn von nachgeben?	*Who's talking of giving in?* (prompting the answer: nobody!)
Was haben wir denn damit erreicht?	*And what have we achieved by that?* (prompting the answer: nothing!)

Adding *schon* makes it absolutely clear that the question is rhetorical:

Was hat er denn schon damit gewonnen?	*And what did he gain by that?* (prompting the answer: nothing!)

(iv) Yes/no questions with *denn* can be used as exclamations of surprise. They often begin with *so*:

Ist das Wetter denn nicht herrlich?	*How lovely the weather is!*
So hat sie denn die Stelle erhalten?	*So she did get the job!*

(v) The combination *denn noch* is used to recall a fact:

Wie heißt er denn noch? *What is his name again?*

The sense of *denn noch* is similar to that of *doch gleich* (see **9.1.7c**).

Other uses of denn

(i) *denn* is used as a coordinating conjunction indicating a cause or reason (see **17.1.2**). It corresponds to English 'for', 'because', e.g.:

Er kann uns nicht verstehen, denn er spricht kein Deutsch	*He can't understand us, because he doesn't speak any German*

(ii) The combination *es sei denn, (dass)* is a conjunction meaning 'unless'. It is mainly used in formal registers. For details see **14.3.3d**.

Sie kommt gegen ein Uhr, es sei denn, sie wird aufgehalten	*She's arriving at about one o'clock, unless she's held up*

(iii) *geschweige denn* means 'let alone', 'still less'. It is used mainly in formal registers:

Er wollte mir kein Geld leihen, geschweige denn schenken	*He didn't even want to lend me any money, let alone give me any*

(iv) *denn* is sometimes used in literary registers and set phrases after comparatives for *als* 'than', e.g. *mehr denn je* 'more than ever'. For details, see **6.5.2a**.

(v) *denn* is sometimes used in place of *dann* 'then' in everyday speech in North Germany, e.g. *Na, denn geht es eben nicht.* This usage is common, but is not accepted as standard.

9.1.7 *doch*

doch is used typically to try to persuade the listener of the speaker's point of view. It usually expresses a contradiction or disagreement and often corresponds to English 'though' or a tag question. The element of persuasion is given more force if *doch* is stressed.

(a) In STATEMENTS, *doch* indicates disagreement with what has been said

(i) If *doch* is stressed, it clearly contradicts, and its meaning is close to that of *dennoch* or *trotzdem*. If it is unstressed, it appeals more politely and tentatively for agreement or confirmation:

Gestern hat es **doch** geschneit	*All the same, it did snow yesterday*
Gestern hat es doch geschneit	It snowed yesterday, didn't it?
Ich habe **doch** Recht gehabt	All the same, I was right
Ich habe doch Recht gehabt	I was right, wasn't I?
Wir müssen **doch** morgen nach Bremen	All the same, we have got to go to Bremen tomorrow
Ich habe ihm abgeraten, aber er hat es **doch** getan	I advised him against it, but he did it all the same
Du hast doch gesagt, dass du kommst	*You did say you were coming, didn't you?*

(ii) When being used in this way, unstressed *doch* can turn a statement into a question expecting a positive answer. It is then the equivalent of a following *oder?* or *nicht* (*wahr*) *?* and one of these may be used as well:

Den Wagen kann ich mir doch morgen abholen?	*I can collect the car tomorrow, can't I?*
Du kannst mir doch helfen(, oder)?	You can help me, can't you?
Du glaubst doch nicht, dass ich es getan habe?	Surely you don't think I did it?
Es hat ihr doch Sandra gesagt	*It was Sandra who told her, wasn't it?*

(iii) Unstressed *doch* can also mildly point out a reason for disagreement. In such contexts it has much the same force as *aber*, see **9.1.1**:

Wir wollten doch heute Abend ins	*Surely we were going to go to the*

Theater gehen	*theatre tonight (, weren't we?)*
Die Ampel zeigt doch rot, wir dürfen noch nicht fahren	*But the lights are red, we can't go yet*

(iv) In literary German *doch* can be used with the verb first in the clause. This explains the preceding statement:

War ich doch so durch den Lehrbetrieb beansprucht, dass ich dafür keine Zeit fand (*Grass*)	*After all, I was so busy with my lessons that I didn't have any time for that*

(v) For the difference in meaning between *doch* and *ja* in statements appealing for the listener's agreement, see **9.1.19a**.

(b) *doch* in COMMANDS

(i) The force of *doch* in commands varies depending on the context. Sometimes it adds a note of impatience or urgency, and in this sense it can be strengthened by *endlich* or, in a negative sentence, by *immer*:

Reg dich doch nicht so auf!	*For heaven's sake, don't get so excited*
Bring den Wagen doch (endlich) in die Werkstatt!	For goodness' sake, take the car to the garage
Mach doch nicht (immer) so ein Gesicht!	Don't keep making faces like that
Freu dich doch!	*Do cheer up*

(ii) In other sentences, *doch* can moderate the force of the command, making it sound more advisory or encouraging. This can be made even more clear by adding *mal* or *ruhig*:

Lassen Sie mich doch (mal) das Foto sehen!	*Why don't you just let me see the photograph?*
Kommen Sie doch (ruhig) morgen vorbei!	*Why not drop by tomorrow?*

(c) In W-QUESTIONS, *doch* asks for confirmation of an answer or the repetition of information

doch can be strengthened by adding *gleich* (see **9.1.16**), and its force is then similar to that of *denn noch*, see **9.1.6a**:

Wie heißt doch euer Hund?	*What did you say your dog is called?*
Wer war das doch (gleich)?	Who was that again?
Wohin fahrt ihr doch auf Urlaub?	*Where did you say you were going on holiday?*

(d) In EXCLAMATIONS, *doch* emphasizes the speaker's surprise

In such sentences the force of *doch* is close to that of *ja*, see **9.1.19b**:

Wie winzig doch alles von hier oben aussieht!	*But how tiny everything looks from up here!*
Du bist doch kein kleines Kind mehr!	You're not a baby any more, you know!
Das ist doch die Höhe!	That really is the limit!
Wir haben doch Gulasch bestellt!	*But it was goulash we ordered!*

(e) In WISHES expressed with *Konjunktiv II*, doch emphasizes the urgency of the wish

See also **14.5.6b**. In sentences like these *doch* is the equivalent of *nur* and can be used together with it, see **9.1.25c**:

Wenn er doch jetzt käme!	*If only he would come now!*
Wäre ich doch (nur) zu Hause geblieben!	*If only I'd just stayed at home!*

(f) Other uses of *doch*

(i) In reply to a question, *doch* contradicts a negative or emphasizes an affirmative reply

Bist du nicht zufrieden? Doch!	*Aren't you satisfied? Yes, I am*
Kommt er bald? Doch!	Is he coming soon? Oh, yes
Er hat nie etwas für uns getan. – Doch, er hat mir einmal 100 Euro geliehen	*He's never done anything for us. – Oh, yes he has, he once lent me a hundred euros*

When used with *nein* or *nicht*, *doch* emphasizes a negative reply:

Mutti, kann ich ein Stück Schokolade haben? – Nein doch, du hast jetzt genug gegessen	*Mummy, can I have a piece of chocolate? – Certainly not, you've had enough to eat*

(ii) As a conjunction, *doch* is an alternative to *aber* 'but', e.g. *Sie wollten baden gehen, doch es hat geschneit.* For details see **17.1.1**.

9.1.8 *eben*

eben typically expresses a confirmation that something is the case and often corresponds to English 'just'.

(a) In STATEMENTS, *eben* emphasizes an inescapable conclusion

Das ist eben so	*But there, that's how it is*
Ich kann ihn nicht überreden. Er ist eben hartnäckig	I can't convince him. He's just obstinate
Er zeichnet ganz gut – Nun, er ist eben ein Künstler	He draws quite well – Well, he is an artist
Ich mache es, so gut ich eben kann	I'll do it as well as I can (given the

Eben das hat er schreiben wollen	circumstances) *That's what he wanted to write*

(b) In COMMANDS, *eben* emphasizes that there is no real alternative

These commands are often introduced by *dann*:

(Dann) bleib eben im Zug sitzen!	*Well, just stay on the train, then*
(Dann) fahr eben durch die Stadtmitte!	*Well, just drive through the town centre, then*

halt (see **9.1.17**) has much the same meaning as *eben*. It was originally limited to South Germany and Austria, but its use has spread rapidly in recent years and it is at least as frequent as *eben* in a large part of Germany.

(c) Other uses of *eben*

(i) *eben* can be used in the sense of 'exactly', 'precisely', 'just'. In this meaning it can be used to emphasize the following word, or as a response to a statement or a question. *genau* is a common alternative:

Das wäre mir eben recht	*That would be just what I'd like*
Eben 'daran hatte ich nie gedacht	That's the one thing I hadn't thought of
Eben dieses Haus hatte mir zugesagt	It was this house which attracted me
Das wird sie doch kaum schaffen. – Eben!	*She won't manage it, will she? – Precisely!*

(ii) Used with *nicht* before an adjective, *eben* lessens the force of *nicht*. *gerade* is a common alternative:

Sie ist nicht eben fleißig	*She's not exactly hard-working*
Der Zug war nicht eben pünktlich	*The train wasn't what you'd call on time*

(iii) As an adverb, *eben* means 'just (now)'. *gerade* is very similar in meaning:

Wir sind eben (erst) angekommen	Eben geht mir ein Licht auf
Mit zweitausend Euro im Monat kommen wir eben (noch) aus	

(iv) As an adjective, *eben* means 'level', e.g. *Die Straße ist hier nicht eben*

9.1.9 *eh*

eh has a very similar meaning to *ohnehin* (see **9.1.26**) or *sowieso* (see **9.1.30**). Like them, it is an equivalent of English 'anyway' or 'in any case'. Until recently it was used predominantly in colloquial South German, especially in Austria and Bavaria, but it is now widespread throughout Germany:

Wenn ich arbeite, brauche ich eh immer mehr zum Essen (*Kroetz*)	*When I'm working I need more to eat anyway*
Für eine Markenpersönlichkeit wie Sie ist das neue Magazin der Süddeutschen eh ein Muss (*SZ*)	*It goes without saying that the new magazine of the "Süddeutsche Zeitung" is a must for a person of quality like you*

9.1.10 *eigentlich*

eigentlich emphasizes that something is actually the case, even if it appears otherwise. It is often used to change the topic of conversation.

(a) *eigentlich* in QUESTIONS

(i) *eigentlich* is typically lightly stressed and can tone a question down and makes it sound more casual. It is close to the sense of English 'actually' and is often used in conjunction with *denn*:

Sind Sie eigentlich dieses Jahr schon in Urlaub gewesen?	*Tell me, have you been on holiday yet this year?*
Wohnt Eva (denn) eigentlich schon lange in Hameln?	*Has Eva actually been living a long time in Hamelin?*

(ii) In *w-* questions, *eigentlich* implies that the question has not yet been answered fully or satisfactorily. In these contexts it is rather more heavily stressed and close in meaning to *im Grunde genomme n*, *tatsächlich* or *wirklich*, with the sense of 'at bottom', 'in actual fact', 'in reality':

Wie heißt er eigentlich?	*What's his real name?*
Warum besuchst du mich eigentlich?	*Why, basically, did you come to visit me?*

(b) *eigentlich* in STATEMENTS

(i) *eigentlich* indicates that something actually is the case, despite appearances. It moderates a refusal, an objection or a contradiction by indicating how strong the reasons are:

Er scheint manchmal faul, aber er ist eigentlich sehr fleißig	*He appears lazy sometimes, but in actual fact he's very hard-working*
Ich wollte eigentlich zu Fuß gehen	In actual fact, I did want to walk
Ich trinke eigentlich keinen Kaffee mehr	*Well, actually, I don't drink coffee now*

(ii) Sometimes *eigentlich* can signal that the matter is still a little open:

Wir haben eigentlich schon zu	*Well, actually, we're already closed*
Das darf man hier eigentlich nicht	(hinting that an exception might not be wholly out of the question) *Strictly speaking, that's not allowed here* (but, possibly, …)

(c) As an ADJECTIVE, *eigentlich* means 'real', 'actual', 'fundamental'

Was ist die **eigentliche** Ursache?	Er nannte nicht den **eigentlichen** Grund

9.1.11 *einfach*

(a) *einfach* as a PARTICLE

When it is used as a particle, *einfach* emphasizes that alternative possibilities are excluded. It usually corresponds to English 'simply' or, especially in commands, 'just'. In commands it is frequently used in conjunction with *doch* and/or *mal*, and in exclamations it is often combined with *ja*:

Ich bin einfach weggegangen	*I simply walked away*
Ich werde ihm einfach sagen, dass es nicht möglich ist	I'll simply tell him it's not possible
Warum gehst du nicht einfach ins Bett?	Why don't you simply go to bed? Why don't you just go and lie down?
Leg dich (doch) einfach hin!	
Geh doch einfach mal zum Zahnarzt!	Why not just simply go to the dentist?
Heute ist das Wetter (ja) einfach herrlich!	*The weather is simply lovely today!*

(b) *einfach* as an ADVERB

There is a clear difference in meaning between contexts where *einfach* is being used as an adverb and those where it is used as a particle. As an adverb, *einfach* is **always stressed** and means 'in a simple manner'. Compare the two uses in the following sentences:

Sie macht es **einfach**	*She is doing it simply* (in an uncomplicated way)
Sie **macht** es einfach	*She's simply doing it* ('just', 'without further ado')
Du musst **einfach** anfangen	*You have to begin simply*
Du musst einfach **anfangen**	*You simply/just have to begin*

9.1.12 *erst*

(a) As a modal particle in STATEMENTS and EXCLAMATIONS, *erst* has intensifying force

erst implies that something really is the absolute limit and perhaps more than expected or desirable. It is often strengthened by adding *recht*:

Dann ging es erst (recht) los	*Then things really got going*
Das konnte sie erst recht nicht	That she really couldn't manage
Das macht es erst recht schlimm	That really does make it bad
Sie hat schon Hunger, aber das Kind erst (recht)!	*She may be hungry, but it's the kid who's really hungry*

In exclamations which are effectively wishes, *nur* or *bloß* are alternatives to *erst* (and may be used with it):

Wäre er doch erst zu Hause!	*If only he were at home!*

Wenn er (bloß) erst wieder arbeiten könnte!	*If only he could start work again!*

(b) *erst* as a focus particle

In this use *erst* focuses on the next word or phrase and indicates that there are/were less or fewer than expected.

(i) Before a number or an expression of quantity it corresponds to 'only':

Ich habe erst zehn Seiten geschrieben	*I've only written ten pages*
Er ist erst sieben Jahre alt	He's only seven years old
Ich habe erst die Hälfte fertig	*I've only got half of it finished*

(ii) Before other nouns the sense is 'nothing less than':

Erst mit einem Lehrstuhl in Berlin wird er sich zufrieden geben	*He'll only be satisfied with a professorship in Berlin*

(iii) In time expressions, *erst* implies that it is later than expected or desirable. It usually corresponds to English 'only', 'not before', 'not until' or, in some contexts, 'as late as':

Er kommt erst (am) Montag	*He's only coming on Monday* / *He's not coming till Monday*
Es ist erst acht Uhr	*It's only eight o'clock*
Ich kam erst im Sommer nach Heidelberg	I didn't get to Heidelberg until the summer
erst wenn/als (see **19.3.2b**)	not until, only when *once he's home …*

wenn er erst zu Hause ist, …	*We had only just left the pub*
Wir waren eben aus der Kneipe abgezogen	I shan't be able to collect the car till the beginning of next week
Ich kann den Wagen erst Anfang nächste Woche abholen	*It was only in September that I noticed it*
Erst im September ist es mir aufgefallen	

(iv) The opposite of *erst* 'only' as a focus particle is *schon*, see **9.1.29e**.

(c) *erst* 'only' needs to be carefully distinguished from *nur* (see 9.1.25d)

(i) With numbers or expressions of quantity, *erst* implies that more are to follow. In English this can be made clear by adding 'as yet' to the sentence. *nur*, on the other hand, sets a clear limit, i.e. that number and no more. Compare:

Ich habe **erst** drei Briefe bekommen	*I've only received three letters (as yet)* (more are expected)
Ich habe **nur** drei Briefe bekommen	*I've only received three letters* (i.e. three and no more)

(ii) In time expressions, *erst* has the sense 'not before', etc., but *nur* means 'on that one occasion'. Compare:

Sie ist erst (am) Montag gekommen	*She only came on Monday* (i.e. not before Monday)
Sie ist nur (am) Montag gekommen	*She only came on Monday* (i.e. on no other day)

The distinction between *erst* and *nur* is not always consistently maintained in colloquial speech, but it is usual to do so in writing.

9.1.13 *etwa*

(a) In YES/NO QUESTIONS, *etwa* implies that something is undesirable

It suggests that the answer ought to be *nein*. A common English equivalent is a negative statement followed by a positive tag question or an exclamation beginning 'Don't tell me …':

Hast du die Zeitung etwa schon weggeworfen?	*You haven't thrown the newspaper away already, have you?*
Ist das etwa dein Wagen?	That's not your car, is it?
Habt ihr etwa geschlafen?	*Don't tell me you've been asleep!*

Questions like this with *etwa* can be in the form of statements, in which case they also contain *doch nicht*:

Sie wollen doch nicht etwa nach Paderborn umziehen?	*You don't want to move to Paderborn, do you?*

(b) In NEGATIVE SENTENCES, *etwa* intensifies the negation

Sie müssen nicht etwa denken, dass ich ihn verteidigen will	*Now don't go and think I want to defend him*
Komm nicht etwa zu spät zum Flughafen!	*Make sure you don't get to the airport too late!*

(c) In CONDITIONAL SENTENCES *etwa* stresses the idea of a possibility

Wenn der Zug etwa verspätet sein sollte, dann verpassen wir den	*If the train were to be delayed we'll miss our connection to Gera*

Anschluss nach Gera	
Wenn das Wetter etwa umschlagen sollte, müssen wir die Wanderung verkürzen	*If the weather were to change, we'll have to shorten our walk*

(d) *etwa* as a focus or scalar particle before a noun or noun phrase

(i) Before a number or expression of size or quantity, *etwa* expresses approximation:

Ich komme etwa um zwei	*I'll come at about two*
Es kostet etwa dreißig Euro	It costs about thirty euros
Er ist etwa so groß wie dein Vater	He is about as tall as your father
Wir haben es uns etwa so vorgestellt	*We imagined it to be something like that*

(ii) Before a noun or list of nouns, *etwa* suggests a possibility. It is often close in meaning to English 'for instance' or 'for example':

Er begnügte sich mit etwa folgender Antwort	*He was satisfied, for example, with the following answer*
Bist du sicher, dass du Jürgen gesehen hast, und nicht etwa seinen Bruder Thomas?	Are you sure you saw Jürgen, and not perhaps his brother Thomas?
Er hat viele Hobbys, (wie) etwa Reisen, Musik und Sport	He has a lot of hobbies, for example travelling, music and sport
Willst du etwa (am) Sonntag kommen?	You're not thinking of coming on Sunday, are you?
Hast du etwa Martina in Verdacht?	*Is it Martina you suspect, perhaps?*

9.1.14 *freilich*

freilich typically has a concessive sense and its meaning is similar to

that of *allerdings*, see **9.1.2**. It **never** means 'freely', which is *frei* in most contexts.

(a) Within a clause *freilich* means 'admittedly', 'all the same'

Es scheint freilich nicht ganz so einfach zu sein	*Admittedly, it doesn't appear to be that simple*
Wir nehmen ihn mit, freilich muss er pünktlich am Treffpunkt sein	*We'll take him with us, even so he'll have to get to the meeting place on time*

(b) In answer to a question, *freilich* stresses that the answer is yes

freilich is often used in conjunction with *ja*. It lacks the hint that there is some kind of reservation or qualification to the answer which is sometimes present with *allerdings*:

Kennst du die Angelika? – (Ja,) freilich (kenne ich sie)!	*Do you know Angelika? – Of course (I know her)!*
Kannst du auch alles besorgen? – (Ja,) freilich!	*Can you see to it all? – Certainly I can!*

9.1.15 *gar*

gar is used in a number of ways with an intensifying sense.

(a) *gar* can intensify negatives, especially *nicht* and *kein*

In these contexts *gar* is an alternative to *überhaup t*, see **9.1.31c**:

Sie hatte gar nicht gewusst, ob er abfahren wollte (*Johnson*)	*She hadn't even known whether he wanted to leave*
Ich habe doch heute gar keine Zeit	*I really haven't got any time at all today*

(b) *gar* can intensify so or *zu* with an adjective

allzu is a more frequent alternative in this sense:

Du darfst das nicht gar so ernst nehmen	*You really mustn't take that quite so seriously*
Es waren gar zu viele Leute auf der Straße	*There were far too many people in the street*

(c) *gar* can emphasize the following word and indicate surprise

In contexts like this *gar* is the equivalent of English 'even' or 'possibly' and is a less frequent alternative to *sogar*, used mainly in literary registers:

Eher würde ich einem Habicht oder gar Aasgeier eine Friedensbotschaft anvertrauen als der Taube (*Grass*)	*I would rather entrust a message of peace to a hawk or even a vulture than to a dove*

9.1.16 *gleich*

As a modal particle *gleich* is used in **W- questions** to politely request the repetition of information. It is often used with *doch*, see **9.1.7c**:

Wie war Ihr Name (doch) gleich?	*What was your name again?*

Was hast du gleich gesagt?	*What was it you said?*

gleich is also used as a time adverb in the sense of 'immediately', e.g. *Ich werde ihn* ***gleich*** *fragen*, or to mean 'at once' or 'at the same time', e.g. *Er hat* ***gleich*** *zwei Hemden gekauft.*

9.1.17 *halt*

halt has much the same meaning as *eben* (see **9.1.8**) and represents an attempt by the speaker to put an end to any discussion because the situation does not allow any alternatives. It was originally used mainly in the South, but in recent years it has become much more frequent elsewhere.

(a) In STATEMENTS, *halt* stresses that something is the case

Das ist halt so	*But there, that's how it is*
Da kann man halt nichts machen	There's just nothing you can do about it
Chinesisch ist halt eine sehr schwere Sprache	Chinese is just simply a very difficult language
Junge Mädchen in dem Alter haben halt ihren eigenen Willen	*Young girls just have a mind of their own at that age*

(b) In COMMANDS, *halt* stresses that there is no alternative

Commands with *halt* often begin with *dann*:

Dann nimm halt die U-Bahn!	*Just take the underground/subway, then*
(Dann) fahr halt etwas langsamer!	*Just drive a bit more slowly, then*

9.1.18 *immerhin*

immerhin indicates that something might not have come up to expectations, but is acceptable at a pinch. It corresponds most often to English 'all the same' or 'even so' and can be used within a sentence or (very frequently) as a response:

Du hast immerhin tausend Euro gewonnen	*All the same, you won a thousand euros*
Wir haben uns immerhin einen neuen Blu-ray-Player anschaffen können	Even so, we were able to buy a new blu-ray player
Das Wetter im Urlaub war miserabel, aber wir hatten ein schönes Zimmer – (Na,) immerhin!	*The weather was lousy on holiday, but we did have a nice room. – Well, that was something, at least!*

9.1.19 *ja*

(a) In STATEMENTS, *ja* appeals for agreement

(i) By using *ja* the speaker insists that what they are saying is correct. A common English equivalent is the 'do' form of the verb, or a cleft sentence:

Wir haben ja gestern davon gesprochen	*We did talk about that yesterday (you know)*
Ihr habt ja früher zwei Autos gehabt	Of course, you used to have two cars
Hier im Gebirge ist es ja im Frühjahr am schönsten	It's in spring when it's nicest here in the mountains
Ich komme ja schon	It's all right, I'm on my way
Der katastrophale Zustand des Landes ist ja gerade das Erbe der Diktatur (*Spiegel*)	*It is the catastrophic state of the country which is the legacy of dictatorship*

(ii) *ja* has a distinct meaning from *doch* (see **9.1.7a**) when used to appeal for agreement. Whereas *doch* implies that the listener might have a different opinion, *ja* always assumes that speaker and listener agree. Compare:

Du könntest dir **ja** Karls Rad leihen	*You could borrow Karl's bike, of course* (we both know you can)
Du könntest dir **doch** Karls Rad leihen	*Surely, you could borrow Karl's bike* (you might have thought you couldn't)
Das ist es **ja** eben	*Why, of course, that's the point*
Das ist es **doch** eben	Don't you see, that's just the point
Er kann unmöglich kommen, er ist **ja** krank er ist **doch** krank	*He can't possibly come, he's ill, as you know he's ill, don't you know*

(b) In EXCLAMATIONS, *ja* expresses surprise

Heute ist es ja kalt!	*Oh, it is cold today!*
Er hat ja ein neues Auto!	Why, he's got a new car!
Das ist ja unerhört!	That really is the limit!
Da kommt ja der Arzt!	*Oh (good), here comes the doctor!*

By using *ja* (or *doch*, which has a very similar force in exclamations, see **9.1.7d**), the speaker expresses surprise that something is the case at all. Thus:

> *die Milch ist* **ja/doch** sauer! would be said if the milk had been expected to be fresh

On the other hand, when *aber* or *vielleicht* are used in exclamations, surprise is expressed at the extent of a quality, see **9.1.1a** and **9.1.33a**, thus:

> *die Milch ist* **aber/vielleicht** sauer! expresses surprise at *how* sour the milk is

(c) *ja* intensifies a COMMAND

There is often an implied warning or threat, especially if *ja* is stressed:

Bleib ja hier!	*Be sure to stay here!*
Geht ja nicht auf die Straße!	*Just don't go out onto the street!*
Er soll **ja** nichts sagen	*He really must not say anything (or else)*

nur is an alternative to *ja* to intensify commands and sound a note of warning, see **9.1.25a**.

(d) *ja* can be used as a focus particle

In a string of nouns, verbs or adjectives, *ja* (sometimes in combination with *sogar*) emphasizes the importance of the one (usually the last) before which it is placed. This often corresponds to English *indeed* or *even*:

Es war ein Erfolg, ja ein Triumph	*It was a success, indeed a triumph*
Es war ein unerwarteter, ja ein sensationeller Erfolg	It was an unexpected, indeed a sensational success
Sie konnte die Aussage bestätigen, ja (sogar) beeiden	*She was able to confirm the testimony, even on oath*

(e) *ja* is the affirmative particle, corresponding to English 'yes'

e.g. *Kommst du morgen?* – **Ja!** It can also be used as a tag, e.g. *Es geht um acht los, ja?*

9.1.20 *jedenfalls*

The phrases *auf jeden Fall* and *auf alle Fälle* are possible alternatives to the particle *jedenfalls* in most contexts.

(a) In STATEMENTS *jedenfalls* stresses the reason why something should be the case

(or why something is not as bad as it seems). In these contexts, *jedenfalls* corresponds to English 'at least' or 'at any rate', and *wenigstens* or *zumindest* are alternatives to it, see **7.7.2**:

Vielleicht ist er krank, er sieht jedenfalls schlecht aus	*Perhaps he's ill, at least he doesn't look well*
Er ist nicht gekommen, aber er hat sich jedenfalls entschuldigt	*He didn't come, but at least he did apologize*

(b) In COMMANDS *jedenfalls* indicates that something should be done in any event

jedenfalls corresponds to English 'anyhow' or 'in any case':

Bei schönem Wetter gehen wir morgen baden. Bring jedenfalls deinen Badeanzug mit	*If it's fine we'll go swimming tomorrow. Bring your costume along anyhow*

9.1.21 *lediglich*

lediglich is used before another word to indicate a restriction or a limit. It is an emphatic alternative to *nur* in the sense of 'only', 'no more than'. It is typical of formal registers and can sound stilted:

Er hat lediglich zwei Semester in Münster studiert	*He only studied two semesters in Münster*

Ich verlange lediglich mein Recht	*I am only asking for what's due to me*

9.1.22 *mal*

(a) *mal* moderates the tone of a sentence, making it sound less blunt

(i) *mal* is very frequent in commands, requests and questions. It can correspond to English 'just' (although in practice this is used far less often than German *mal*):

Lies den Brief mal durch!	*Just read the letter through (will you?)*
Hol mal schnell den Feuerlöscher!	Just quickly go and get the fire extinguisher
Das sollst du mal probieren	You just ought to try that
Ich will ihr schnell mal simsen	I just want to text her quickly
Würden Sie mir bitte mal helfen?	Could you just help me?
Hältst du mir mal die Tasche?	*Just hold my bag for me, will you?*

(ii) In everyday spoken German *mal* is almost automatically added to commands, especially if there is nothing else in the sentence apart from the verb:

Sieh mal her! Hör mal zu! Komm mal herüber! Sag mal!

(iii) The tone of a request or a command can be moderated further by adding *eben*:

Reich mir eben mal das Brot!	*Just pass me the bread, would you?*
Lies den Brief eben mal durch!	*Won't you please just read the letter through?*

(iv) The combination *doch mal* makes a command sound more casual:

Nimm doch mal ein neues Blatt!	*Why don't you get another piece of paper?*
Melde dich doch mal beim Chef!	*Why not just arrange to see the boss?*

(v) *man* is a colloquial North German equivalent to *mal* in commands and requests

Geh du man vor!	*You just go ahead*
Seien Sie man bloß ruhig! (*Fallada*)	*Just keep calm*

(b) The particle *mal* is quite different to the adverb *einmal* 'once' (see 8.4.3a)

In other words, the particle *mal* is not simply a shortened form of *einmal*, which cannot be used for *mal* in any of the contexts explained in **9.1.22a**. However, there are occasions when *einmal* is shortened to *mal* in everyday speech, but this should not be confused with the particle *mal*:

(i) *noch einmal* '(once) again', 'once more':

Ich habe ihn noch (ein)mal gewarnt	*I warned him once again*

(ii) *nun einmal* 'just'. This combination emphasizes the lack of alternatives. It is a more forceful alternative to *eben* or *halt*, see **9.1.8a**:

Es wird nun (ein)mal lange dauern	*It's just going to take a long time*

(iii) *nicht einmal* 'not even':

Er hat sie nicht (ein)mal gegrüßt	*He didn't even say hello to her*

9.1.23 *noch*

(a) *noch* indicates something additional

(i) It can be used in this sense as a modal particle within the clause:

Das wird sich noch herausstellen	*That will remain to be seen, too*
Wer war noch da?	Who else was there?
Und es hat auch noch geregnet!	*And apart from that, it rained too*

(ii) It can also be used as a focus particle before a number, corresponding to English 'another':

Er hat noch drei Stunden geschlafen	*He slept another three hours*
Ich trinke noch eine Tasse Kaffee	*I'll have another cup of coffee*

(b) *noch* in time expressions

(i) *noch* can indicate that something is going on longer than expected. It corresponds to English 'still' or ' yet' and can be strengthened by *immer*:

Angela schläft (immer) noch	*Angela's still asleep*
Klaus ist (immer) noch nicht gekommen	Klaus hasn't come yet/Klaus still hasn't come
Sie wohnen (immer) noch in Fritzlar	They're still living in Fritzlar
Ich habe sie noch nie gesehen	I've never seen her (yet)
Sie ist doch noch jung	*She's still young, isn't she?*

(ii) If a particular point in time is indicated, *noch* indicates that an event took place or will take place by then. The implication may be that this is contrary to expectations:

Ich habe ihn noch vor zwei Tagen gesehen	*I saw him only two days ago*
Sie hat noch im Mai ihre Dissertation abgegeben	She managed to hand her thesis in by the end of May
Ich rufe den Arzt noch heute an	*I'll ring the doctor before tomorrow*

In this sense, *noch* comes after short time words and phrases as well as before them, e.g. *Ich rufe den Arzt* **heute noch** an.

(c) Other uses of *noch*

(i) In *w-* questions, *noch* asks for the listener to jog the speaker's memory, i.e. suggesting that something has just slipped their mind:

Wie hieß er noch?	*Oh now, what was his name?*
Wann war das Spiel noch?	*Oh now, when was the game?*

(ii) *noch* is used with comparatives in the sense of 'even' (see **6.5.2c**), e.g.:

Er ist **noch** größer als du

(iii) *noch* is used with *weder* as the equivalent of English 'neither … nor' (see **17.1.3d**), e.g.:

Er liest weder Bücher **noch** Zeitungen

(iv) *noch* is used with *so* and an adjective in a concessive sense (see **17.6.2b**), e.g.:

Wenn sie (auch) **noch so** fleißig ist, sie wird die Prüfung doch nicht bestehen.

9.1.24 *nun*

(a) In QUESTIONS, *nun* signals dissatisfaction with a previous answer

By using *nun* the speaker insists that the correct or complete information should be provided:

Wann kommt der Zug nun an?	*When does this train get in, now?*
Stimmt es nun, dass sie verheiratet ist?	*Now, is it really true that she's married?*

nun is commonly used on its own as a question to push the other speaker to give more information, cf. *Nun?* 'Well?', *Nun … und?* 'And then what?'

(b) *nun* signals that the speaker considers the topic exhausted

In this sense *nun* typically occurs on its own at the beginning of a sentence. It often corresponds to English 'well':

Nun, das ist alles schon wichtig, aber ich glaube, wir müssen zunächst das Wahlergebnis besprechen	*Well, of course that's all very important, but I think we've got to discuss the election results first*
Nun, natürlich hat er die besten Erfahrungen	Well, of course he's got the widest experience
Nun, wir werden ja sehen	Well, we shall see
Nun, meinetwegen!	*All right then*

(c) *nun* is used as an adverb of time to mean 'now'

nun is rather less specific than *jetzt* and it is not used as much to refer simply to the present moment:

Nun wollen wir umkehren	*Now we'll turn back*
Nun hat er mehr Zeit als früher	Now he's got more time than he used to have
Geht es dir nun besser?	*Are you better now?*

9.1.25 *nur*

nur is used as a modal particle with an intensifying sense, and as a focus particle with a restrictive sense (= 'only'). *bloß*, see **9.1.5**, is a frequent alternative to *nur* in all its uses except where indicated below. It is slightly more emphatic than *nur*, and it is used rather more in speech and less formal registers.

(a) In COMMANDS, *nur* intensifies the basic meaning

Depending on the sense of the command, i.e. whether it is an urgent instruction or a request, *nur* can make it sound more of a threat **or** more reassuring respectively.

(i) '**threatening**' or '**warning**' *nur* is more common in negative commands or when *nur* is stressed. This sense is similar to that of *ja* (see **9.1.19c**):

Komm nur nicht zu spät!	*You'd better not be late!*
Nimm dich nur in Acht!	You'd better be careful!
Geh nur nicht in dieses Geschäft!	Whatever you do, don't go into that shop
Sehen Sie nur, was Sie gemacht haben!	*Just look what you've done!*

In this sense, *nur* (but **not** *bloß*) can be used initially in a positive or negative command using the infinitive or with no verb at all:

Nur nicht so schnell laufen!	*Just don't run so fast!*
Nur aufpassen!	Just be sure to look out!

Nur immer schön langsam!	*Take it nice and slow!*

(ii) The '**reassuring**' sense of *nur* is close to that of *ruhig* (see **9.1.27**):

Lass ihn nur reden!	*Just let him speak, do!*
Kommen Sie nur herein!	Do come in!
Hab nur keine Angst!	Don't be afraid, will you!
Nur weiter!	*Just carry on!* (implying: *It's all right so far*)

bloß is **not** used in this 'reassuring' sense, and commands with *bloß* always have a 'warning' tone. Compare *Lass ihn bloß reden!* 'Just let him speak (and you'll suffer the consequences)' with the first example in **(ii)** above.

(b) *nur* intensifies W-QUESTIONS and makes them sound more urgent

Wie kann er nur so taktlos sein?	*How on earth can he be so tactless?*
Was können wir nur tun, um ihr zu helfen?	Whatever can we do to help her?
Wo bleibt sie nur?	*Where on earth is she?*

Questions like this can be used as exclamations of reproach or astonishment, as no real answer is possible or expected:

Wie siehst du nur wieder aus?!	*What on earth do you look like?!*
Warum musste er nur wegfahren?!	*Why on earth did he have to go away?!*

(c) *nur* intensifies a wish in the form of a *wenn*-clause

See also **14.5.6b**. The force of *nur* is similar to that of *doch*, see **9.1.7e**, and they are often used together to add an even greater intensity to the

wish:

Wenn sie (doch) nur anrufen würde!	*If only she would call!*
Hätte ich nur mehr Zeit!	If only I had more time!
Wenn er mir nur geschrieben hätte!	*If only he had written to me!*

(d) *nur* is used as a focus particle to express a restriction

i.e. with the force of English 'only'. *nur* is used in all kinds of sentences to qualify nouns, verbs or adjectives:

Ich wollte nur Guten Tag sagen	*I only/just wanted to say hello*
Die Mittelmeerküste ist sehr schön, sie ist leider nur etwas dreckig	The Mediterranean coast is very nice, only I'm afraid it's rather dirty
Er geht nur bei schönem Wetter spazieren	He only goes for a walk when it's fine
Ich vermute nur, dass er gestern in Urlaub gefahren ist	I'm only assuming that he went on holiday yesterday
Man kann es nur dort kaufen	It's only there you can buy it
Dort kann man nicht nur Bücher kaufen, sondern auch allerlei Zeitschriften	*You can not only buy books there, but also magazines of all kinds*

For the difference between *erst* and *nur* as an equivalent of English 'only', see **9.1.12c**. *lediglich*, see **9.1.21**, is a more formal alternative to *nur*.

nur dass is used as the equivalent of the English conjunction 'only' (see also **17.7f**), e.g.:

Die Zimmer waren in Ordnung, **nur dass** die Duschen fehlten.

9.1.26 *ohnehin*

ohnehin indicates that something is correct irrespective of any other reasons given or implied. A typical English equivalent is 'anyway' or 'in any case'. It is a rather more formal alternative to the more colloquial *eh* (see **9.1.9**), or to *sowieso* (see **9.1.30**):

Er trinkt ohnehin zu viel	*He drinks too much anyway*
Der Zug hat ohnehin Verspätung	The train's late anyway
Du musst sofort zum Arzt – Ich hätte ihn ohnehin morgen besucht	*You'll have to go to the doctor right away – I would have gone to see him tomorrow in any case*

9.1.27 *ruhig*

ruhig lends a reassuring tone to what the speaker is saying. This meaning is clearly related to that of the adjective *ruhig* 'quiet'. It is used in commands (where it is an alternative to *nur*, see **9.1.25a**), and in statements, especially with a modal auxiliary:

Bleib ruhig sitzen!	*Don't get up for me*
Arbeite ruhig weiter!	*Just carry on* (i.e. don't let me disturb you)
Auf dieser Straße kannst du ruhig etwas schneller fahren	*It's all right, you can go a bit faster on this road*
Sie dürfen ruhig hier im Zimmer bleiben	*You can stay here in this room, I don't mind*

9.1.28 *schließlich*

schließlich indicates that the speaker accepts the validity of a reason. It usually corresponds to English 'after all', or a tag question:

Es liegt schließlich nicht genug Schnee auf der Piste	*After all, there isn't enough snow on the piste, is there?*

Wir wollen ihn schließlich nicht zu sehr reizen	We don't want to annoy him too much, do we?
Schließlich kann das einem jeden passieren	*After all, it can happen to anybody*

9.1.29 *schon*

(a) The use of *schon* in STATEMENTS

(i) *schon* generally expresses agreement or confirmation in principle, but with slight reservations. This sense is in practice concessive and *schon* often has (or implies) a following *aber*, *nur* or the like. *zwar* or, especially in North Germany, *wohl* are possible alternatives, see **9.1.34a** and **9.1.35b**:

Das ist schon möglich (aber ...)	*That's quite possible (but ...)*
Ich wollte schon kommen	Well, I did want to come
Das stimmt schon, aber es könnte auch anders kommen	That may be true, but things might turn out differently
Ja, ich glaube schon (aber ...)	*Well, I think so (but ...)*
Der Film hatte schon wunderschöne Aufnahmen, nur war er etwas langweilig	*The movie may have had some lovely shots, only it was a bit boring*

(ii) In a **response**, *schon* corrects what has just been said and indicates why it was wrong:

Niemand fährt über Ostern weg – Mutter schon!	*Nobody's going away over Easter – But mother is*
Heute waren keine deiner Freunde da – Der Uli aber schon!	None of your friends came today – But Uli did
Er hat da ein sehr schönes Haus gekauft – (Das) schon, aber ...	*He's bought himself a very nice house there – Well yes, but ...*

(iii) In statements referring to the future, *schon* emphasizes the speaker's confidence that something will happen. *schon* usually sounds reassuring, but in some contexts and situations it may take on a more threatening tone. English 'all right' has similar force:

Er wird uns schon helfen	*He'll help us all right*
Es wird schon gehen	It'll be all right, don't worry
Ich krieg's schon hin	I'll manage it all right
Dem werde ich's schon zeigen!	*I'll show him all right!*

(b) *schon* gives persuasive force to a W-QUESTION

In particular if a negative answer is expected or the speaker has a negative attitude:

Was sagt die Regierung zu Russland? – Nichts. Was sollen sie schon sagen?	*What does the government say about Russia? – Nothing. But then, what are they to say?*
Wer kann diesem Angebot schon widerstehen?	*Who can refuse this offer?* (i.e. 'nobody')
Warum kommt der schon wieder?	*What's he coming back for?* (implying: 'he's up to no good')
Na, und wenn schon?	*So what?*

(c) In CONDITIONAL SENTENCES *schon* emphasizes the condition

In addition, *schon* may point to the inescapability of the conclusion. It is normally used only in open conditions, with the indicative, see **14.3.2**:

Wenn ich das schon mache, dann muss ich über alle Probleme	*If I am going to do it, I'll need to be told about all the problems*

informiert sein	
Wenn du schon ein neues Auto kaufst, dann aber kein so teures	If you are going to buy a new car, then don't get such an expensive one
Wenn sie schon ans Meer fährt, dann will sie auch baden	*If she's going to the seaside, she will want to go swimming*

(d) In COMMANDS, *schon* adds an insistent note

The sentence often begins with *nun*:

(Nun,) beeile dich schon!	*Do hurry up (then)!*
Fang schon an!	Do make a start!
Sag mir schon, was du denkst! Ich werde es dir nicht übel nehmen	*Do tell me what you think. I shan't take it amiss*

(e) *schon* is used as a focus particle to express a restriction

erst is the opposite of *schon* in the contexts dealt with under **(i)** and **(ii)** below, see **9.1.12b**.

(i) Referring to time, *schon* indicates that something is happening or has happened sooner than expected or desirable. In some contexts, *schon* can stress that something actually has happened. In this meaning, it can correspond to English 'already', but it is much more widely used:

Er war schon angekommen	*He had already arrived*
schon am nächsten Tag	the very next day
Da bist du ja schon wieder	There you are back again
Sind Sie schon einmal in Köln gewesen?	Have you been to Cologne before?
Ich habe ihn auch schon in der Bibliothek gesehen	I've sometimes seen him in the library
Das habe ich schon 2012 geahnt	I suspected that as early as 2012
	It was as early as May that I

Schon im Mai ist es mir zum ersten Mal aufgefallen	*noticed it for the first time*

(ii) Before a number or an expression of quantity, *schon* indicates that this is more than expected or desirable:

Sie hat schon dreißig Mails bekommen	*She has already had thirty e-mails*
Ich habe schon die Hälfte des Buches gelesen	I've already read half the book
Er wartet schon eine Stunde auf dich	*He's already been waiting for you for an hour*

(iii) When *schon* qualifies a noun (or, less often, another part of speech), it expresses a restriction:

Schon der Gedanke ist mir unsympathisch, schon wegen ihrer Kinder	*I don't like even thinking about it, not least because of their children*
Das geht schon daher nicht, weil …	*That's impossible, not least because …*
Schon vor dem Krieg war die Eisenbahn in Schwierigkeiten geraten	*Even before the war the railways had run into difficulties*

9.1.30 *sowieso*

sowieso indicates that something is correct irrespective of any other reasons given or implied. It usually corresponds to English 'anyway' or 'in any case'. It is an alternative to *eh*, or, in rather more formal contexts, *ohnehin*, see **9.1.9** and **9.1.26**:

Ich kann heute sowieso nicht arbeiten	*I can't work today anyway*
Der ist sowieso scharf auf sie	He fancies her anyway
Ich wäre sowieso nach Nürnberg	*I would have gone to Nuremberg in any case*

gefahren

9.1.31 *überhaupt*

(a) *überhaupt* makes STATEMENTS and COMMANDS more general

The English equivalent is often 'at all' or 'anyhow':

Duisburg ist überhaupt eine grässliche Stadt	*Duisburg is a dreadful city anyhow*
Das ist überhaupt eine gefährliche Angelegenheit	That's a risky business in any case
Er liebte die italienische Sprache, ja die Sprachen überhaupt (*Goes*)	He loved the Italian language, indeed, languages in general
Seinen Mut müsste man haben, dachte ich. Oder überhaupt Mut (*Walser*)	One ought to have his courage, I thought. Or any courage at all
Ihr sollt überhaupt besser aufpassen!	*You ought anyway to pay more attention*

(b) In QUESTIONS, *überhaupt* casts doubt on the basic assumption

Er singt nicht besonders gut – Kann er denn überhaupt singen?	*He doesn't sing particularly well – Can he sing at all?*
Wie konntest du überhaupt so was tun?	How could you do such a thing at all?
Der Brief ist nicht da. Wo kann er überhaupt sein?	The letter's not there. Wherever can it be?
Was will er denn überhaupt?	*What on earth does he want?*

(c) *überhaupt* intensifies a negative

It typically corresponds to English 'at all'. *gar* is a common alternative, see **9.1.15a**:

Du hättest es überhaupt nicht tun sollen, und besonders jetzt nicht	*You ought not to have done it at all, and particularly not now*
Sie hat überhaupt keine Ahnung	She's got no idea at all
Ich weiß überhaupt nichts von seinen Plänen	*I don't know anything about his plans*

9.1.32 *übrigens*

übrigens is used in STATEMENTS and QUESTIONS to indicate a casual remark which is incidental to the main topic of conversation. It corresponds to English 'by the way', etc.:

Ich habe übrigens erfahren, dass er eine neue Stelle bekommen hat	*Incidentally, I've found out he's got a new job*
Sie hat übrigens vollkommen Recht	She's perfectly right, by the way
Wo wollt ihr übrigens dieses Jahr hin?	*By the way, where are you going this year?*

9.1.33 *vielleicht*

(a) In EXCLAMATIONS unstressed *vielleicht* expresses surprise

These exclamations can have the form of statements or questions.

Siehst du vielleicht schlecht aus!	{	*Oh, you really do look awful!*

Du siehst vielleicht schlecht aus!	
Die Kiste ist vielleicht schwer!	*How heavy the crate is!*
Du bist vielleicht ein Idiot!	You really are stupid!
Das hat vielleicht gegossen!	It really did pour!
Ich habe vielleicht gestaunt!	*I wasn't half surprised!*

Like *aber* (see **9.1.1a**), *vielleicht* expresses surprise at a difference in **degree** from the speaker's expectation, whereas *ja* (see **9.1.19b**) relates to a difference in **kind**.

(b) In YES/NO QUESTIONS, *vielleicht* signals that the speaker expects a negative answer

The sense of *vielleicht* is close to that of *etwa*, see **9.1.13a**. The English equivalent is often an exclamation beginning with 'Don't tell me…' or a negative statement followed by a positive tag question:

Willst du mir vielleicht erzählen, dass …?	*You don't mean to tell me that …, do you?*
Soll ich vielleicht bis 7 Uhr abends hier sitzen?	I'm not supposed to sit here till seven at night, am I?
Arbeitet er vielleicht?	*Don't tell me he's working?*

(c) *vielleicht* is used as an adverb of attitude corresponding to English 'perhaps'

Sie ist vielleicht 30 Jahre alt	*She is perhaps thirty years old*
Sie wird vielleicht morgen kommen	She may come tomorrow
Wird sie uns vielleicht morgen	*Will she perhaps come to see us*

besuchen?	*tomorrow?*

When it is used as an adverb *vielleicht* has a quite different meaning from when it is used as a particle. The difference is often only clear from the intonation, with heavy emphasis when it is being used as a particle:

Die Kiste ist vielleicht schwer	*Perhaps the case is heavy*
Die Kiste ist vielleicht schwer!	*How heavy this case is!*

In requests in the form of a question, *vielleicht*, like English 'perhaps', expresses polite reserve on the part of the speaker:

Könnten Sie mir vielleicht sagen, wo es zum Bahnhof geht?	*Could you perhaps tell me the way to the station?*
Würden Sie mir vielleicht helfen?	*Would you perhaps help me?*

9.1.34 *wohl*

(a) In STATEMENTS, *wohl* signals a fair degree of probability

The force of *wohl* is very similar to that of the future tense, see **12.3.2**, and it is often used together with it. It corresponds to the English future tense or a positive statement followed by a negative tag question, or to formulae like 'I suppose', 'probably':

Das wird wohl der Briefträger sein	*That'll be the postman*
Sie sind wohl neu hier	You're new here, aren't you?
Sie hat wohl ihr Auto schon verkauft	I suppose she's already sold her car
Diese Probleme versteht er wohl nicht	He probably doesn't understand these problems
	I've never spoken to him, but I have

Ich habe ihn nie gesprochen, wohl aber oft gesehen	*often seen him*

The combination *ja wohl* sounds rather more certain, corresponding to English '(pretty) certainly' or 'no doubt':

Sie wird ja wohl noch in Potsdam sein	*She's pretty certainly still in Potsdam*
Das weißt du ja wohl	*No doubt you know that*

The combination *wohl doch* (or, for some speakers, *doch wohl*) sounds rather less certain, though the speaker hopes that it is the case:

Er hat wohl doch noch einen Schlüssel	*Surely he's got another key, hasn't he?*
Die Antje wird doch wohl noch das Abitur schaffen	*Antje's surely going to get through her Abitur, isn't she?*

(b) Stressed *wohl* in STATEMENTS has a concessive sense

wohl expresses agreement or confirmation in principle, but tinged with a slight reservation. It often has (or implies) a following *aber*, *nur* or the like. *zwar* (see **9.1.35a**) or, especially in South Germany, *schon* (see **9.1.29a**) are possible alternatives in this sense:

Er ist wohl mein Freund, aber ich kann ihm nicht helfen	*He may be my friend, but I can't help him*
Das ist wohl möglich(, aber …)	*That may be possible(, but …)*
Herbert ist wohl nach Basel gefahren, aber nur für eine Woche	*Herbert did go to Basle, but only for a week*

(c) In QUESTIONS *wohl* signals uncertainty on the part of the speaker

wohl can make the question sound tentative, as if the speaker doubts whether the other can give a clear answer. The question can be in statement form.

Wer hat diesen Brief wohl geschrieben?	*Who can possibly have written that letter?*
Wie spät ist es wohl?	I wonder what time it is
Ist Peter wohl schon zu Hause?	Peter is at home, isn't he?
Darf ich wohl bei Ihnen telefonieren?	Might I use your telephone?
Ludwig ist wohl gestern Abend angekommen?	*Ludwig arrived last night, didn't he?*

(d) *wohl* intensifies a COMMAND, making it sound urgent, insistent and rather abrupt

wohl is often used with *werden* or *wollen*:

Hebst du wohl das Buch wieder auf!	*Pick that book up again right away!*
Wirst du wohl sofort wieder ins Bett gehen!	Will you go straight back to bed!
Wollt ihr wohl endlich still sein!	*Once and for all, will you be quiet!*

(e) As an adverb, usually stressed, *wohl* has the sense 'well', 'fully'

wohl often strengthens an affirmative response (i.e. *jawohl!* 'yes, indeed'):

Ich fühle mich wohl	*I feel well*
Er hatte es sich wohl überlegt	He had considered it fully
Er weiß sehr wohl, dass er Unrecht	He knows full well that he's wrong

hat Schlaf wohl! Leb wohl! Und er war so geartet, dass er solche Erfahrungen wohl vermerkte (*Th. Mann*)	Sleep well! Farewell! *And his nature was such that he took full note of such experiences*

9.1.35 *zwar*

(a) *zwar* can be used in a concessive sense

In this sense, *zwar* is typically followed by a clause with *aber* (or one is implied), and the combination *zwar … aber* can have the force of English '(al)though', see **17.6.2b**:

Er ist zwar etwas erkältet, aber er kommt heute Abend noch mit Er stand nach Kinkels Aussage „zwar in der Mitte, aber doch mehr nach rechts als nach links" (*Böll*)	*Although he's got a bit of a cold, he's still coming with us tonight* *According to Kinkel he was 'politically in the centre, but tending all the same to the right rather than the left'*

wohl is a possible alternative to *zwar* in this concessive sense, especially in North Germany, see **9.1.34b**, whilst in South and Central Germany *schon* is often used, see **9.1.29a**.

(b) *und zwar* is used in the sense of English 'namely'

It specifies something which has just been mentioned:

Mein Entschluss fiel auf dem neuen Flugplatz in Mexico-City, und zwar im letzten Augenblick (*Frisch*)	*My decision was taken at the new airport in Mexico City, (in actual fact) at the very last minute*

Ich habe die wichtigsten Museen in Wien besucht, und zwar das kunsthistorische, das naturhistorische und die Albertina	*I visited the most important museums in Vienna, (namely) the Museum of Art History, the Museum of Natural History and the Albertina*

Verbs: conjugation

Chapters 10–16 deal with the forms of VERBS **in German and their uses**:

- **Chapter 10**: the forms of verbs (their CONJUGATION)
- **Chapter 11**: the INFINITIVE (e.g. *machen*, *schlafen*) and the PARTICIPLES (e.g. *machend*, *schlafend*; *gemacht*, *geschlafen*)
- **Chapter 12**: the TENSES
- **Chapter 13**: the PASSIVE
- **Chapter 14**: the MOODS (especially the IMPERATIVE and the SUBJUNCTIVE)
- **Chapter 15**: the MODAL AUXILIARY verbs (e.g. *dürfen*, *können*, *müssen*)
- **Chapter 16**: the VALENCY of verbs (i.e. which COMPLEMENTS are needed to make a sentence)

Verbs typically express actions or activities (like *fallen, gehen*, *schreiben*, *stehlen*), **processes** (like *gelingen, sterben*, *wachsen*) or **states** (like *bleiben*, *leben*, *wohnen*). They constitute the core of the sentence and are usually accompanied by one or more NOUN PHRASES, i.e. the SUBJECT and the other COMPLEMENTS, as illustrated in **Table 10.1**.

Table 10.1 Subject, verb and complements

Subject	Verb	Complement(s)

Der Lehrer	**redet**	Unsinn
Ihre Freundin	**unterrichtet**	die deutsche Sprache
Die Mutter	**gibt**	ihrer Tochter die Tasche
Der alte Mann	**wartet**	auf seine Frau

In German, verbs change their form (typically adding endings or changing the vowel) to express various grammatical ideas like TENSE, e.g. present and past; MOOD, e.g. the imperative and the subjunctive; and PERSON and NUMBER, e.g. *du* (second person singular), *wir* (first person plural). These are known as the grammatical categories of the verb. All the different forms of each verb make up its CONJUGATION.

This chapter gives **details on the conjugation of regular and irregular verbs** in German, as follows:

- Basic principles of the **conjugation** of verbs in German (section **10.1**)
- The conjugation of the simple **present** and **past tenses** and the **imperative** (section **10.2**)
- The conjugation of the **compound tenses**: **future** and **perfect** (section **10.3**)
- The conjugation of the **passive** (section **10.4**)
- The conjugation of the **subjunctive** (section **10.5**)

The forms of all strong and irregular verbs are given in Table 10.23, at the end of the chapter.

10.1 Verb conjugation

10.1.1 Forms, endings and grammatical categories

German verbs are usually given in dictionaries in the form of the INFINITIVE, which ends in - *en* or - *n*, e.g. *kauf* ***en***, *sing* ***en***, *wander* ***n***.

This is the form in which verbs are usually learned by speakers of other languages.

If we take off the ending - *(e)n*, we obtain the basic core of the verb, which is called the ROOT, e.g. ***kauf*** -, *sing* -, *wander* -. The root carries the basic meaning of the verb (i.e. 'buy', 'sing' 'wander', etc.). By **adding endings to the root**, or by **changing its vowel**, we can show a number of different **grammatical categories** which are relevant in the sentence, as illustrated in the remainder of this section.

(a) Indicating the person and number of the subject of the verb

Table 10.2 Person and number endings

	First person	Second person	Third person
Singular	**ich** kauf **e**	**du** kauf **st**	**er/sie/es** kauf **t**
	ich sing **e**	**du** sing **st**	**er/sie/es** sing **t**
	ich wander **e**	**du** wander **st**	**er/sie/es** wander **t**
Plural	**wir** kauf **en**	**ihr** kauf **t**	**sie** kauf **en**
	wir sing **en**	**ihr** sing **t**	**sie** sing **en**
	wir wander **n**	**ihr** wander **t**	**sie** wander **n**

There is a close link between a VERB and its SUBJECT. This is indicated in German by adding special endings to the verb for each PERSON (i.e. **first**, **second** or **third** person, see Chapter 3) according to NUMBER (i.e. **singular** or **plural**), as shown in Table 10.2. The 'polite' form of the second person (see **3.3**) always has the same ending on the verb as the third person plural, e.g. *Sie kaufen*, *Sie singen*, *Sie wandern*.

In this way verbs are said to **agree** with the subject. Those forms of verbs which have an ending in AGREEMENT with the subject like this are known as FINITE verbs (see **10.1.4** for more details).

(b) Indicating tense

Table 10.3 Simple tenses

Present tense	Past tense
ich kaufe	ich kauf **te**
ich singe	ich s **a** ng
ich wandere	ich wander **te**

The various forms of the verb which **express time relationships** are known as its TENSES. We can add endings to the root of the verb (or change the vowel of some verbs) to show time. German, like English, has two SIMPLE TENSES (i.e. with a single word), the PRESENT tense and the PAST tense, as illustrated in **Table 10.3**. The formation of these simple tenses is explained in section **10.2**.

The other tenses are called COMPOUND TENSES because they are made up of two (or more) words, i.e. the AUXILIARY VERBS *haben*, *sein* or *werden* together with the PAST PARTICIPLE or the INFINITIVE of the verb, as illustrated in **Table 10.4**. More detail on the formation of these tenses is given in section **10.3**.

Table 10.4 Compound tenses

Perfect tense	Pluperfect tense	Future tense
ich **habe** gekauft	er **hatte** gekauft	sie **werden** kaufen
ich **habe** gesungen	er **hatte** gesungen	sie **werden** singen
ich **bin** gewandert	er **war** gewandert	sie **werden** wandern

The use of the tenses in German is explained in detail in Chapter 12.

(c) Indicating mood

The forms of the verb can show whether we are dealing with a fact, a possibility or a command, by changing the category known as the MOOD of the verb. German has three moods, and typical forms of each are illustrated in **Table 10.5**.

Table 10.5 Mood in German

Indicative	Subjunctive	Imperative
sie kauf **t**	sie kauf **e**	kauf **e** !
sie s **a** ng	sie s **ä** ng **e**	sing **t** !
Sie **werden** wandern	Sie **würden** wandern	wander **n Sie** !

- The INDICATIVE mood states a fact
- The SUBJUNCTIVE mood indicates a possibility or a report
- The IMPERATIVE mood expresses a command

The **indicative** is the usual mood for **statements** or **questions**, and the information about verb conjugation in sections **10.2** – **10.4** relates to the indicative mood. The formation of the subjunctive is detailed in section **10.5**, and its uses are explained in **Chapter 14**. The **imperative** mood is treated in section **14.1**, together with other ways of expressing commands in German.

(d) Changing the perspective of the sentence

Using a different VOICE of the verb, i.e. the ACTIVE VOICE or the PASSIVE VOICE, allows different elements to appear as the subject of the verb and thus relates the action from a different perspective.

Table 10.6 Active and passive

Active	werden-passive	sein-passive
Sie **schickt** die Mail ab	Die Mail **wird abgeschickt**	Die Mail **ist abgeschickt**
Er **verkaufte** das Buch	Das Buch **wurde verkauft**	Das Buch **war verkauft**

German has **two forms** of the **passive voice**, as illustrated in **Table 10.6**. These are formed by using the auxiliary verb ***werden*** (the *werden* -passive), or the auxiliary verb ***sein*** (the *sein*- passive) with a past

participle.

For details about the conjugation of the passive, see **10.4**, and the uses of the two passive forms are explained in **Chapter 13**.

(e) The non-finite forms of the verb

Table 10.7 Non-finite forms of the verb

Infinitive	Present participle	Past participle
kauf **en**	kauf **end**	**ge** kauf **t**
sing **en**	sing **end**	**ge** sung **en**
wander **n**	wander **nd**	**ge** wander **t**

The NON-FINITE forms of the verb are the INFINITIVE, the PRESENT PARTICIPLE and the PAST PARTICIPLE, as illustrated in **Table 10.7**. Unlike the **finite** forms of the verb (see **(a)** above) these non-finite forms are fixed and **they do not agree with the subject of the verb**.

They can be combined with **auxiliary verbs** to form the **compound tenses** and the **passive voice** (see **10.3 – 10.4**), and they have other uses which are explained in **Chapter 11**.

10.1.2 'Weak' and 'strong' verbs

There are two main types of CONJUGATION for verbs in German, conventionally known as the WEAK and STRONG conjugations. The main difference between these is the way in which the **past tense** is formed:

• WEAK verbs form their past tense by adding - ***te*** to the root:

kauf-en	→	kauf- **te**
mach-en	→	mach- **te**
wander-n	→	wander- **te**

• STRONG **verbs form their past tense by changing the vowel of the**

root:

flieg-en	→	fl **o** g
greif-en	→	gr **i** ff
sing-en	→	s **a** ng

Most German verbs follow the 'weak' conjugation. In practice these are the regular verbs.

There are far fewer strong verbs, but many of them are very common, so that half the verbs in a typical text will be strong. There is no way of telling from the infinitive of a verb whether it is weak or strong and **foreign learners need to learn which verbs are strong**, together with their three most important forms, the PRINCIPAL PARTS, as illustrated in Table 10.8. These are the **infinitive**, the **past tense** and the **past participle**, and all the other forms can be built up from these three basic forms.

Table 10.8 Principal parts of strong verbs

Infinitive	Past tense	Past participle
bleiben	blieb	geblieben
singen	sang	gesungen
fahren	fuhr	gefahren

The principal parts of all strong and irregular verbs are given in Table 10.23.

In practice, the **vowel changes** in most strong verbs (called *ABLAUT* in German) follow a small number of **recurrent patterns**. For example, fourteen verbs have the same pattern as *bleiben*, i.e.:

bleiben – blieb – geblieben

It is useful to be aware of these patterns, which are shown in Table 10.9.

Table 10.9 Vowel changes in strong verbs

Vowel change	Example
ei – ie – ie	bleiben – blieb – geblieben
ei – i – i	greifen – griff – gegriffen
i – a – u	singen – sang – gesungen
i – a – o	schwimmen – schwamm – geschwommen
ie – o – o	fliegen – flog – geflogen
e – a – o	helfen – half – geholfen
e – a – e	geben – gab – gegeben
e – o – o	fechten – focht – gefochten
a – u – a	fahren – fuhr – gefahren
a – ie – a	fallen – fiel – gefallen

10.1.3 Irregular verbs

A few verbs do not follow the usual weak or strong conjugation but have irregular forms. There are **four group** s of these **irregular verbs**.

(a) Irregular weak verbs

There are a few verbs which have the usual endings of weak verbs in the past tense and the past participle, but with **vowel changes** (and sometimes also **consonant changes**) in addition, e.g.:

kennen – k **a** nnte – gek **a** nnt rennen – r **a** nnte – ger **a** nnt
bringen – br **ach** te – gebr **ach** t denken – d **ach** te – ged **ach** t

The principal parts of all irregular weak verbs are given in **Table 10.23**.

(b) Irregular strong verbs

A few strong verbs have **consonant changes** as well as vowel changes

in the past tense and the past participle, e.g.:

gehen – g **ing** – geg **ang** en	leiden – l **itt** – gel **itt** en
stehen – st **and** – gest **and** en	ziehen – z **og** – gez **og** en

The principal parts of all irregular strong verbs are given in **Table 10.23**.

(c) The modal auxiliary verbs and *wissen*

The six MODAL AUXILIARY verbs *dürfe n*, *könne n*, *möge n*, *müsse n*, *sollen*, *wollen*, and the verb *wissen* 'know' have an **irregular present tense** with no ending in the third person singular and, in most cases, a different vowel in the singular and plural. Most of them also have vowel changes in the past tense and the past participle:

können	er k **a** nn, wir k **ö** nnen	k **o** nnte	gek **o** nnt
müssen	m **u** sste	gem **u** sst	
wissen	er m **u** ss, wir m **ü** ssen er w **ei** ß, wir w **i** ssen	w **u** sste	gew **u** sst

All the forms of these verbs in the indicative tenses are given in **Table 10.12**, and the uses of the modal auxiliaries are explained in **Chapter 15**.

(d) The verbs *haben, sein* and *werden*

These three verbs are wholly irregular and their indicative forms are given in **Table 10.11**. Aside from their basic meanings, i.e. *haben* 'have', *sein* 'be', *werden* 'become', they are used as AUXILIARY VERBS to form the compound tenses and the passives.

10.1.4 Agreement of subject and finite verb

As explained in **10.1.1a** and illustrated in **Table 10.2**, finite verbs have endings in agreement with the **person** and **number** of the **subject**. However, there are some contexts where there can be uncertainty, especially if the subject is not a noun phrase or there is doubt whether the subject is singular or plural.

(a) If the subject of the verb is a clause, the verb has the third person singular endings

The clause can be a subordinate clause (see **17.2**) or an infinitive clause (see **11.2.2**):

Dass sie nichts tut, **ärgert** mich sehr	*I'm very annoyed that she isn't doing anything*
Sie wiederzusehen **hat** mich gefreut	*I was pleased to see her again*

(b) If the verb *sein* is followed by a noun in the plural

In these contexts the verb has a plural ending even if the subject is singular:

Mein Lieblingsobst **sind** Kirschen	*My favourite fruit is cherries*

This is in particular the case with *es*, *das* and other neuter pronouns (see **3.6.2b**, **5.1.1h** and **5.3.1a**):

Was **sind** das für große Vögel? – Es **sind** Störche	*What kind of large birds are those? – They are storks*
Sind es deine Handschuhe?	Are they your gloves?
Welches **sind** deine Handschuhe?	*Which are your gloves?*

(c) If the subject consists of a series of linked nouns, the verb is usually plural

Helmut und sein Bruder **sind** gekommen	*Helmut and his brother have come*
Vater, Mutter, Tochter **saßen** beim Essen	*Father, mother and daughter were sitting down to a meal*

However, there are some contexts where it is possible to use a singular ending (although this is still less common than the plural ending).

(i) if the subject follows the verb:

Im Osten **winkte** das Völkerschlachtdenkmal, die Türme und die Essen von Leipzig	*In the East, the memorial to the Battle of 1813, the towers and chimneys of Leipzig beckoned*

(ii) if the parts of the subject are seen as separate or distinct (this is especially the case if the nouns are qualified by *jeder* or *kein*):

Wenig später **wurde** heiße Suppe und Weißbrot ausgeteilt	*A little later hot soup and white bread were distributed*
Ihm **konnte** kein Arzt und kein Apotheker mehr helfen	*No doctor or chemist could help him now*

(iii) if the linked nouns are felt to form a single whole:

Diese Haltung und Miene **war** ihm eigentümlich (*Th. Mann*)	*This attitude and facial expression were peculiar to him*

(iv) with the conjunctions *sowie* and *sowohl … als/wie* (*auch*), see **17.1.4**:

Sowohl Manfred als auch seine Frau **war** einverstanden	*Both Manfred and his wife agreed*

(d) If the subject consists of nouns linked by a disjunctive conjunction

i.e. a conjunction with the meaning 'or'. The verb is then most often in the singular.

(i) This applies in particular to (*entweder* ...) *oder* and *nicht* (*nur*) ..., *sondern* (*auch*)

Entweder Hans oder Karl **wird** mir helfen	*Either Hans or Karl will help me*
Mit dieser Lösung **wäre** nicht nur die Mehrheit der Partei, sondern auch Stöber selbst zufrieden gewesen	*Not only the majority of the party but Stöber too would have been satisfied with this solution*

A plural verb is sometimes used with these, especially if the nearest noun is plural, e.g. *Entweder Karl oder seine Brüder* ***werden*** *mir helfen.*

(ii) With *weder ... noch*, either a singular or a plural verb is possible, but the plural is more frequent:

In Berlin **waren** sich weder Kabinett noch Regierungsfraktionen einig	*In Berlin neither the cabinet nor the governing parties were agreed*

(e) If a coordinated subject includes a pronoun

In these contexts the verb has the ending corresponding to the combination, i.e. first, second or third person plural.

(i) This applies in particular with the conjunction *und* and its synonyms:

Mein Mann und ich (= wir)	*My husband and I separated in the*

trennten uns im Frühjahr (*Spiegel*)	*spring*
Du und sie (= ihr) **könnt** damit zufrieden sein	You and she can be satisfied with that
Sowohl sie als auch er (= sie) **haben** sich darüber gefreut	*Both she and he were pleased about it*

These combinations can sound artificial, especially if the second person plural *ihr* is involved, and they are often avoided by rephrasing the sentence and adding the appropriate plural pronoun, e.g. ***Ihr*** *könnt damit zufrieden sein, du und sie.*

(ii) With disjunctive conjunctions (i.e. those meaning 'or'), the verb usually agrees with the nearest pronoun, whether this precedes or follows:

Entweder du oder ich **werde** es ihnen sagen

Nicht ich, sondern ihr **sollt** es ihnen sagen

Dann **werden** nicht nur sie, sondern auch ihr es ihnen sagen

Ich, nicht du, **sollst** es ihnen sagen

These, too, can sound unnatural, and can be avoided by repeating the verb or splitting one pronoun off, e.g.:

Entweder du **sagst** es ihnen, oder ich **sage** es ihnen

Entweder du **sollst** es ihr sagen **oder ich**

(f) Usage with expressions of measure or quantity

(i) With singular nouns of indefinite quantity followed by a plural noun, the verb is often plural:

Ein Dutzend Eier **kosten** 2 Euro	*A dozen eggs cost 2 euros*
In Canary Wharf **arbeiten** eine Menge Leute, die sich solche Wagen	A lot of people who can afford cars like that work in Canary Wharf

leisten können (*BZ*)	A group of students were standing
Eine Gruppe von Studenten **standen** vor dem Bahnhof	in front of the station
Die Hälfte meiner Gedanken **waren** bei ihr (*Grass*)	*Half my thoughts were with her*

This is the predominant usage in speech and common in writing, although the singular is not unusual, especially in writing, e.g. *ein Dutzend Eier* ***kostet*** *2 Euro* or *Die Hälfte meiner Gedanken* **war** *bei ihr*, and some authorities continue to insist that only this is correct.

(ii) With singular measurement words followed by a plural noun, the verb can be either singular or plural, although in practice the singular is rather more frequent:

Ein Kilogramm Kartoffeln **reicht** (**reichen**) aus

Ein Kubikmeter Ziegelsteine **wiegt** (**wiegen**) fast zwei Tonnen

(iii) With nouns of measurement used with a numeral or with a plural determiner, the verb is normally in the plural, although in such cases, masculine and neuter nouns of measurement have no plural ending (see **1.2.8**):

Mehrere Liter Benzin **waren** verschüttet	*Several litres of petrol were spilled*
Fünf Kilo **kosten** fünfzehn Euro	Five kilograms cost fifteen euros
Dafür **wurden** mir tausend Euro angeboten	I was offered a thousand euros for it
80 Prozent der Bevölkerung **waren** dagegen	*80% of the population was opposed to it*

However, a singular ending is often used in such contexts, especially in spoken German, as the quantity is thought of as a single whole: *Zwanzig Euro* ***ist*** */* ***sind*** *zu viel; 80 Prozent der Bevölkerung* ***war*** */* ***waren*** *dagegen.*

(g) Singular collective nouns are used with a singular verb

This contrasts strongly with English (especially British English), where the plural is frequent (or with some nouns, like *police*, the only possibility), and English-speaking learners need to pay careful attention to German usage in such contexts:

Die ganze Familie **ist** verreist	*The whole family have/has gone away*
Unsere Mannschaft **hat** wieder verloren	Our team have/has lost again
Die Polizei **kommt** gleich	The police are coming straight away
Die Regierung **hat** es beschlossen	*The government have/has decided it*

(h) Agreement of neuter indefinites and pronouns with the verb *sein*

The neuter indefinites and pronouns *es*, *das*, *welches*, *wer*, *was* and *beides* can be used with singular or plural forms of *sein*, which in effect agrees with the predicate complement, e.g.:

Das **ist** mein Buch	*That is my book*
Das **sind** meine Bücher	*Those are my books*

See **3.6.2b**, **5.1.1h**, **5.3.1a**, **5.3.3b** and **5.5.3d** for examples with various pronouns.

10.2 The simple tenses, the non-finite forms and the imperative

The forms of the simple present and past tenses, the imperative and

non-finite forms (i.e. the participles and the infinitive) make up the basic conjugation of the German verb. They are all single words, formed by adding different prefixes or suffixes to the verb root, or by changing the form of the root, especially by altering the vowel.

10.2.1 Weak and strong verbs

As explained in **10.1.2**, weak and strong verbs differ mainly in the way in which they form the past tense and the past participle (their 'principal parts'). Weak verbs have the ending *-te* in the past tense and *-t* in the past participle, while strong verbs change the vowel of the root in the past tense and have the ending *-en* (sometimes with a further change of vowel) in the past participle.

Otherwise, both weak and strong verbs have the same endings in the two simple tenses and in the imperative in agreement with the subject of the verb (see **10.1.1a**), and the same prefixes and suffixes in the non-finite forms. **Table 10.10** gives these forms for typical weak and strong verbs. The principal parts of all strong and irregular verbs are given in **Table 10.23**.

Table 10.10 Basic verb conjugation – the simple forms

	Weak			Strong
Infinitive **Present participle** **Past participle**	**kaufen** kauf**end** **ge**kauft	**warten** wart**end** **ge**wartet	**wandern** wander**nd** **ge**wandert	**singen** sing**end** **ge**sung**en**
Present tense	ich kauf**e** du kauf**st** es kauft wir kauf**en** ihr kauft Sie kauf**en** sie kauf**en**	ich wart**e** du wart**est** es wart**et** wir wart**en** ihr wart**et** Sie wart**en** sie wart**en**	ich wand(e)r**e** du wander**st** es wander**t** wir wander**n** ihr wander**t** Sie wander**n** sie wander**n**	ich sing**e** du sing**st** es sing**t** wir sing**en** ihr sing**t** Sie sing**en** sie sing**en**
Past tense	ich kauf**te** du kauf**test** es kauf**te** wir kauf**ten** ihr kauf**tet** Sie kauf**ten** sie kauf**ten**	ich wart**ete** du wart**etest** es wart**ete** wir wart**eten** ihr wart**etet** Sie wart**eten** sie wart**eten**	ich wander**te** du wander**test** es wander**te** wir wander**ten** ihr wander**tet** Sie wander**ten** sie wander**ten**	ich sang du sang**st** es sang wir sang**en** ihr sang**t** Sie sang**en** sie sang**en**
Imperative singular **plural (familiar)** **plural (polite)**	kauf**(e)**! kauf**t**! kauf**en Sie**!	wart**e**! wart**et**! wart**en Sie**!	wand(e)r**e**! wander**t**! wander**n Sie**!	sing**(e)**! sing**t**! sing**en Sie**!

There are a few regular variations to the pattern of endings given in Table 10.10

(a) Verbs whose root ends in - *d* or - *t*, or in - *m* or - *n* after a consonant

These verbs add - *e* - before the endings - ***t***, - *s* ***t***, and the - *t* ***e*** of the past tense of weak verbs: *du arbeit* ***est***, *er arbeit* ***et***, *er arbeit* ***ete***, *gearbeit* ***et***, etc. The forms of ***warten*** 'wait' are given in Table 10.10 as illustration. Other examples:

finden *find*	du find **e** st, er find **e** t, ihr find **e** t;
regnen *rain*	ihr fand **e** t
atmen *breathe*	es regn **e** t, es regn **e** te, geregn **et**
	du atm **e** st, sie atm **e** t, ihr atm **e** t,
	ich atm **e** te, geatm **e** t

(i) These verbs always have the ending - *e* in the **imperative singular**: *arbeite!, finde!, warte!*

(ii) - *e* - is not added in the second person singular of the past tense of strong verbs: *du fandst.*

(iii) Verbs with *l* or *r* before *m* or *n* have no linking - *e-: sie filmt* 'she is filming', *er lernt* 'he is learning'.

(iv) Some strong verbs with a vowel change do not add *-et* in the third person singular of the present tense, see **(e)** and **(f)** below.

(b) Verbs whose root ends in - *s*, - *ß*, - *x* or - *z*

(i) These simply add the ending - ***t*** in the second person singular of the present tense:

rasen *race* – du grüßen *greet* – du faxen *fax* – du sitzen *sit* – du

rast **grüßt** **faxt** **sitzt**

The use of the ending - *est* with these verbs, e.g. *du sitz **est***, is archaic, except in Swiss usage.

(ii) Strong verbs in - *s*, - *ß*, or - *z* add -*e*- before the ending -*st* in the second person singular of the past tense:

lesen *read* – du **lasest** heißen *be called* – du **hießest**

sitzen *sit* – du **saßest** wachsen *grow* – du **wuchsest**

(iii) With these strong verbs, - *e* - was added in older usage before the ending -*t* of the second person plural of the past tense, e.g. *ihr laset*. However, the shorter ending - *t*, e.g. *ihr last*, is now usual.

(c) Verbs whose root ends in -*el* and -*er*

These verbs have a few endings with slight differences from the general pattern, as illustrated by the forms of ***wandern*** given in Table 10.10.

(i) They have the ending - *n* in the infinitive, and the first and third person plural of the present tense, e.g. *klingel **n*** 'ring', *wander **n*** 'wander'.

(ii) In the first person singular of the present tense and the imperative singular, the - *e*- of the root is always dropped with verbs in - *el* and often with verbs in - *er* (more commonly in speech than in writing), e.g. *ich kling **le**, ich wand **(e)re***.

(iii) In spoken German forms are heard in the first person singular of the present tense where the - *e* - of the root is kept, but the - *e* of the ending dropped, e.g. *ich klingel*, *ich wander*, etc.

(d) Verbs whose root ends in a long vowel or diphthong

These sometimes drop - ***e*** - in their endings, in particular:

(i) In the present tense and infinitive of ***tun*** 'do', i.e.:

ich tue, du tust, es tut, wir tu **n**, ihr tut, sie tu **n**

(ii) The present tense of *knien* [kni:ə n] 'kneel' is as follows (see also **21.4.2a**):

ich knie [kni:ə], du kniest [kni:st], er kniet [kni:t],

wir knien [kni: ə n], ihr kniet [kni:t], sie knien [kni: ə n]

(iii) The past tense of the strong verb ***schreien*** ' shout, scream' is similar, i.e.:

ich/er schrie, wir/sie schrien [ʃ ri: ə n]

The past participle is *geschrieen* or *geschrien*.

(iv) Other verbs with a root ending in a long vowel or diphthong typically drop the - ***e*** - of the ending - ***en*** in spoken German, e.g. *schaun*, *gehn*, *gesehn* (for *schauen*, *gehen*, *gesehen*). These forms are occasionally used in writing, especially in dialogue.

(e) Strong verbs with the vowel - *e* - in their root

Most of these verbs **change** - ***e*** - **to** - ***i*** - **or** - ***ie*** - in the second and third person singular present, and in the imperative singular. Full details of all these changes are given with the individual verb in **Table 10.23**. In general, verbs with **short** - ***e*** - [e] change this to short - ***i*** -, while those in **long** - ***e*** - [e:] usually change this to - ***ie*** -, e.g.:

essen *eat*	du **i** sst, es **i** sst, **i** ss!
helfen *help*	du h **i** lfst, es h **i** lft, h **i** lf!
lesen *read*	du l **ie** st, es l **ie** st, l **ie** s!
stehlen *steal*	du st **ie** hlst, es st **ie** hlt, st **ie** hl!

There are a few exceptions to these changes, and a few minor differences with some verbs.

(i) The following strong verbs in *-e-* do not change the vowel to *- i -* or *- ie -*:

bewegen *induce*	gehen *go*	genesen *recover*	heben *lift*
melken *milk*	scheren *shear*	stehen *stand*	weben *weave*

(ii) *erlöschen* 'go out' (of lights, fires) changes *-ö-* to *-i-*: *es erl* ***i*** *scht*

(iii) Three strong verbs which have long *-e-* in their root change this to short *-i-* rather than long *-ie-*:

geben *give*	du g **i** bst, es g **i** bt, g **i** b!
nehmen *take*	du n **i** mmst, es n **i** mmt, n **i** mm!
treten *step*	du tr **i** ttst, es tr **i** tt, tr **i** tt!

(iv) Verbs with this vowel change whose root ends in *-d* or *-t* do not add an ending in the third person singular of the present tense:

gelten *be worth* es g **i** l **t** treten *step* es tr **itt**

(v) In colloquial speech, imperative forms without the vowel change are frequent, e.g. *ess!*, *geb!*, *nehm!* These are considered incorrect.

(f) Strong verbs with *-a-* or *-au-* in their root

Most of these verbs have ***Umlaut*** in the second and third person singular of the present:

fahren *go*	du f **ä** hrst, es f **ä** hrt
lassen *let*	du l **ä** sst, es l **ä** sst
wachsen *grow*	du w **ä** chst, es w **ä** chst
laufen *run*	du l **äu** fst, es l **äu** ft

Full details of all these changes are given with the individual verb in **Table 10.23**. There are some exceptions and further irregularities:

(i) *stoßen* 'push' has *Umlaut* of *-o-*: *du stößt, es stößt*

(ii) *schaffen* 'create' and *saugen* 'suck' do not have *Umlaut*: *du schaffst, saugst*; *er schafft, saugt*

(iii) Verbs whose root ends in *-d* or *-t* do not add an ending in the third person singular of the present tense, e.g.:

halten *hold* es h **ä** l **t** laden *load* es l **ädt** raten *advise* es r **ät**

In spoken South German, *Umlaut* is often lacking with these verbs, and one hears, for example, *sie schlaft* instead of *sie schläft*. This is a non-standard regionalism.

(g) The imperative singular ending *-e*

(i) The ending is optional with most verbs, e.g.:

Komm(e) in den Garten! Setz(e) dich! Stör(e) mich nicht!

It is usually dropped in speech, but quite commonly used in written German.

(ii) Strong verbs with a vowel change never have the ending: *Lies! Gib! Nimm!*

(iii) Verbs with roots ending in - *ig*, and - *m* or - *n* after another consonant always keep the ending *-e*:

Entschuldige bitte! Segne mich! Atme langsam!

(iv) Verbs in - *el* (see **(c)** above) drop the - *e* - of the root, but keep the ending: *Kling* ***le*** *laut!*

(h) The past participle prefix *ge-*

As shown in **Table 10.10**, **most verbs have the** PREFIX ***ge*** - in the **past**

participle, e.g. *gekauft*, *gewandert*, *gewartet*, *gesungen*. However, **verbs which are not stressed on the first syllable have no prefix**. These fall into three groups.

(i) Verbs with inseparable prefixes (see **20.5**):

bedeuten *mean*	bedeutet	misslingen *fail*	misslungen
erfinden *invent*	erfunden	überlegen *consider*	überlegt
gelingen *succeed*	gelungen	unterdrücken *suppress*	unterdrückt
anvertrauen *entrust*	anvertraut	zerbrechen *smash*	zerbrochen

(ii) Verbs in *-ieren*:

gratulieren *congratulate*	gratuliert	studieren *study*	studiert

(iii) A few other verbs which are not stressed on the first syllable:

frohlocken *rejoice*	frohlockt	prophezeien *prophesy*	prophezeit
interviewen *interview*	interviewt	recykeln *recycle*	recykelt
liebkosen *caress*	liebkost	schmarotzen *sponge*	schmarotzt
offenbaren *reveal*	offenbart	stibitzen *nick, pinch*	stibitzt
posaunen *bellow*	posaunt		

Some of these verbs can, alternatively, be pronounced with the first syllable stressed, and in this case the past participle has the prefix *ge-*:

'frohlocken – ge'frohlockt 'liebkosen – ge'liebkost 'offenbaren – ge'offenbart

(i) Separable verbs

Separable verbs are made by adding a PREFIX to a simple verb to form a new verb with a distinctive meaning (as explained in **20.6**). These verbs are called SEPARABLE VERBS because this prefix is separated from the main verb in certain contexts. Separable verbs have exactly the same endings and forms, whether weak or strong, as the simple verbs from which they are derived. Thus, *ankommen* 'arrive' conjugates like *kommen*, *zumachen* 'shut' like *machen*.

(i) In main clauses, the prefix is separated from the verb and is placed at the end of the clause (see also **19.1.1a**):

an kommen *arrive*:	Ich komme morgen um zwei Uhr
aus gehen *go out*:	**an**. Ich kam gestern **an**
nach ahmen *imitate*:	Sie geht heute Abend **aus**
tot schlagen *kill*:	Sie ahmten seine Bewegungen **nach**
	Er schlug das Tier mit einer Keule **tot**

(ii) The prefix remains joined to the verb in all the non-finite forms. The ***ge*** - of the past participle is inserted **between the prefix and the verb**:

ankommen – ankommend – an **ge** kommen

ausgehen – ausgehend – aus **ge** gangen

ausmachen – ausmachend – aus **ge** macht

vorstellen – vorstellend – vor **ge** stellt

If the simple verb has no ***ge*** - in the past participle (see **(h)** above), it is also lacking in all corresponding separable verbs:

einstudieren *rehearse* – einstudiert

anerkennen *recognize* – anerkannt

The ***zu*** of the expanded infinitive (see **11.1.2b**) is also inserted between the prefix and the verb:

ankommen – an **zu** kommen ausgehen – aus **zu** gehen anerkennen – an **zu** erkennen

(iii) In subordinate clauses (see **19.1.1c**), the prefix rejoins the finite verb in final position:

Ich weiß, dass sie heute Abend **ausgeht**

Er sah, wie sie seine Bewegungen **nachahmten**

(j) Forms in everyday speech

Some verb forms which are typical of spoken German differ from those which are usual in writing. Although the norm in informal registers, they are considered non-standard colloquialisms and usually avoided in writing and other more formal registers.

(i) Final - *e* tends to be dropped in all endings, e.g.:

ich kauf, ich hätt, ich fall, er/sie sucht *for* ich kaufe, ich hätte, ich falle, er/sie suchte

If this form is used in written German, for instance to give the impression of informal usage, the missing ending is often indicated by an apostrophe, e.g. *ich kauf', ich hätt'*.

(ii) The ending - *en* tends to be reduced to - *n*, e.g. *wir kaufn*, *sie falln*, *wir kauftn*, *sie botn*, *getretn*

(iii) Especially in North and Central Germany, the verb *brauchen* is used in colloquial speech with no ending in the third person singular of the present tense, e.g. *er / sie brauch.* Although frequent, this usage is considered quite incorrect.

(k) kRecent loan words from English

Many English verbs are simply taken over as German roots and the

usual regular prefixes and endings of weak verbs are simply added to this, e.g.:

surfen *surf (the web)* – Oliver sitzt am Computer und surft durchs Internet

mailen *e-mail* – Hast du ihr gestern gemailt?

simsen *send a text message* – sie simst ihren Freunden dauernd

Kinder und Jugendliche bewegen sich heute fast unbeschränkt auf der ganzen Welt – der virtuellen Welt. Sie „googlen", „surfen", „chatten", „twittern", „skypen", „mailen", „bloggen", „gamen" und so fort (*SGT*)

Some English verbs are less easy to convert into a German root, in which case partly English spellings can be used, e.g. *Dieses Bild wurde schon hundertmal geliked.*

10.2.2 Irregular verbs

The verbs ***sein*** 'be', ***haben*** 'have', ***werden*** 'become', the six **modal auxiliary verbs** *dürfen*, *können*, *mögen*, *müssen*, *sollen*, *wollen* and the verb ***wissen*** 'know' are wholly irregular in their conjugation.

(a) The conjugation of *sein, haben* and *werden* is given in Table 10.11

Further information:

(i) Reduced forms of ***sein*** and ***haben*** are usual in everyday spoken German, e.g.:

es is (for *es ist*) **wir/sie sin**, **ham** (for *wir/sie sind, haben*) **simmer**, **hammer** (for *sind wir, haben wir*)

(ii) Special forms of ***werden***

The old form *ich/es ward* was sometimes used for *ich/es wurde* in

elevated styles into the twentieth century, and it is still occasionally found in deliberately archaicizing (especially biblical) contexts.

The past participle of *werden* has no *ge* - when used as an auxiliary to form the passive, see **10.4**, e.g. *Er ist gelobt worden.* Compare its use as a full verb meaning 'become': *Er ist Schauspieler geworden.*

Table 10.11 Conjugation of *sein, haben, werden*

Infinitive	sein	haben	werden
Present participle	seiend	habend	werdend
Past participle	gewesen	gehabt	geworden
Present tense	ich **bin** du **bist** es **ist** wir **sind** ihr **seid** Sie **sind** sie **sind**	ich **habe** du **hast** es **hat** wir **haben** ihr **habt** Sie **haben** sie **haben**	ich **werde** du **wirst** es **wird** wir **werden** ihr **werdet** Sie **werden** sie **werden**
Past tense	ich **war** du **warst** es **war** wir **waren** ihr **wart** Sie **waren** sie **waren**	ich **hatte** du **hattest** es **hatte** wir **hatten** ihr **hattet** Sie **hatten** sie **hatten**	ich **wurde** du **wurdest** es **wurde** wir **wurden** ihr **wurdet** Sie **wurden** sie **wurden**
Imperative singular plural (familiar) plural (polite)	 **sei!** **seid!** **seien Sie!**	 **hab!** **habt!** **haben Sie!**	 **werde!** **werdet!** **werden Sie!**

(b) The conjugation of the modal auxiliaries and *wissen* is given in Table 10.12

Further information:

(i) The past participle of the modal auxiliaries is rarely used. When these verbs are used in the perfect tenses in conjunction with a main verb, the infinitive is used rather than the past participle (see 11.3.2):

Ich habe es machen **müssen** Sie hatte es sehen **können**

Wir haben ihn lehren **sollen** Sie hatten es uns sagen **wollen**

(ii) The present participle and imperative of the modal auxiliaries are not used. Those of *wissen* are regular, i.e. present participle: *wissend*; imperative: *wisse! wisst! wissen Sie!*

Table 10.12 Conjugation of the modal auxiliary verbs and *wissen*

Infinitive		*dürfen*	*können*	*mögen*	*müssen*	*sollen*	*wollen*	*wissen*
Present tense	**ich**	darf	kann	mag	muss	soll	will	weiß
	du	darfst	kannst	magst	musst	sollst	willst	weißt
	es	darf	kann	mag	muss	soll	will	weiß
	wir	dürfen	können	mögen	müssen	sollen	wollen	wissen
	ihr	dürft	könnt	mögt	müsst	sollt	wollt	wisst
	Sie	dürfen	können	mögen	müssen	sollen	wollen	wissen
	sie	dürfen	können	mögen	müssen	sollen	wollen	wissen
Past tense	**ich**	durfte	konnte	mochte	musste	sollte	wollte	wusste
	du	durftest	konntest	mochtest	musstest	solltest	wolltest	wusstest
	es	durfte	konnte	mochte	musste	sollte	wollte	wusste
	wir	durften	konnten	mochten	mussten	sollten	wollten	wussten
	ihr	durftet	konntet	mochtet	musstet	solltet	wolltet	wusstet
	Sie	durften	konnten	mochten	mussten	sollten	wollten	wussten
	sie	durften	konnten	mochten	mussten	sollten	wollten	wussten
Past participle		gedurft	gekonnt	gemocht	gemusst	gesollt	gewollt	gewusst

10.3 The compound tenses

10.3.1 The conjugation of the verb in the compound tenses

(a) The perfect and future are formed with the auxiliary verbs *sein*, *haben* and *werden*

The perfect tenses are formed with the past participle and *haben* or *sein*, and the future tense is constructed using *werden* and the infinitive, e.g.:

perfect:	ich habe gekauft *I have bought*	ich bin gekommen *I have come*
pluperfect:		

future:	ich hatte gekauft *I had bought*	ich war gekommen *I had come*
future perfect:	ich werde kaufen *I shall/will buy*	ich werde kommen *I shall/will come*
	ich werde gekauft haben *I shall/will have bought*	ich werde gekommen sein *I shall/will have come*

Full forms of all these tenses are given in **Table 10.13** for the weak verb *machen* 'make' and the strong verb *singen* 'sing', which form their perfect tenses with the auxiliary *haben*, and for the strong verb *bleiben* 'remain' which forms its perfect tenses with the auxiliary *sein* (see **10.3.2**). The uses of the tenses are explained in detail in **Chapter 12**.

(b) The non-finite parts of compound tenses

i.e. the past participle in the perfect tenses and the infinitive in the future. These are placed at the **end of the clause** in main clauses and make up the final part of the VERBAL BRACKET (see **19.1.2**), e.g. *Ich **habe** sie gestern in der Stadt **gesehen***. In subordinate clauses the auxiliary usually follows the non-finite part at the end of the clause, see **19.1.3**, e.g. *Sie wissen, dass ich sie gestern in der Stadt* **gesehen habe**.

Table 10.13 Compound tenses of strong and weak verbs

	with *haben*						with *sein*		
Perfect	**ich**	habe	gemacht	habe	gesungen		bin	geblieben	
	du	hast	gemacht	hast	gesungen		bist	geblieben	
	es	hat	gemacht	hat	gesungen		ist	geblieben	
	wir	haben	gemacht	haben	gesungen		sind	geblieben	
	ihr	habt	gemacht	habt	gesungen		seid	geblieben	
	Sie	haben	gemacht	haben	gesungen		sind	geblieben	
	sie	haben	gemacht	haben	gesungen		sind	geblieben	
Pluperfect	**ich**	hatte	gemacht	hatte	gesungen		war	geblieben	
	du	hattest	gemacht	hattest	gesungen		warst	geblieben	
	es	hatte	gemacht	hatte	gesungen		war	geblieben	
	wir	hatten	gemacht	hatten	gesungen		waren	geblieben	
	ihr	hattet	gemacht	hattet	gesungen		wart	geblieben	
	Sie	hatten	gemacht	hatten	gesungen		waren	geblieben	
	sie	hatten	gemacht	hatten	gesungen		waren	geblieben	
Future	**ich**	werde	machen	werde	singen		werde	bleiben	
	du	wirst	machen	wirst	singen		wirst	bleiben	
	es	wird	machen	wird	singen		wird	bleiben	
	wir	werden	machen	werden	singen		werden	bleiben	
	ihr	werdet	machen	werdet	singen		werdet	bleiben	
	Sie	werden	machen	werden	singen		werden	bleiben	
	sie	werden	machen	werden	singen		werden	bleiben	
Future perfect	**ich**	werde	gemacht	haben	werde	gesungen haben	werde	geblieben	sein
	du	wirst	gemacht	haben	wirst	gesungen haben	wirst	geblieben	sein
	es	wird	gemacht	haben	wird	gesungen haben	wird	geblieben	sein
	wir	werden	gemacht	haben	werden	gesungen haben	werden	geblieben	sein
	ihr	werdet	gemacht	haben	werdet	gesungen haben	werdet	geblieben	sein
	Sie	werden	gemacht	haben	werden	gesungen haben	werden	geblieben	sein
	sie	werden	gemacht	haben	werden	gesungen haben	werden	geblieben	sein

10.3.2 *haben* and *sein* in the perfect

The perfect tenses are constructed using one of the AUXILIARY VERBS ***haben*** or ***sein***. Which one is used **depends on the meaning of the verb**.

(a) The following groups of verbs form their perfect with *sein*

All these verbs are INTRANSITIVE, i.e. they do not have a direct object in the accusative case (see **16.3**):

(i) Intransitive verbs of motion:

Ich **bin** in die Stadt gegangen
Wir **sind** aus dem Haus entkommen

Sie **war** zum Boden gefallen
Ihr **wart** auf die Mauer geklettert
Wir **waren** aber schon nach

Um die Zeit werden wir schon angekommen **sein**	Zwickau gefahren

Some verbs of motion take *sein* or *haben* in different contexts, see **(c)** below.

(ii) Intransitive verbs expressing a **change of state**. This group includes a large number of verbs which point to the beginning or end of a process, including many with the prefixes *er-* and *ver-* (see **20.5**):

Sie **ist** schon eingeschlafen	Die Blumen **sind** verwelkt
Die Bombe **ist** um zwei Uhr explodiert	Der Reifen **war** geplatzt
Das Licht **ist** ausgegangen	Der Schnee **war** schon geschmolzen
Mein Buch **ist** verschwunden	Sie werden gleich danach ertrunken **sein**
Die Glocke **ist** erklungen	

In colloquial North German, *anfangen* and *beginnen* form their perfect with *sein*. One thus hears *ich bin angefangen*, *begonnen* for standard German *ich habe angefangen*, *begonnen*.

(iii) Most verbs meaning '**happen**', '**succeed**', '**fail**', i.e.:

begegnen *meet* (by chance)	fehlschlagen *fail*	gelingen *succeed*	geschehen *happen*
glücken *succeed*	missglücken *fail*	misslingen *fail*	
vorgehen *happen*	vorkommen *occur*	zustoßen *happen*	passieren *happen*

Ich **bin** ihr gestern begegnet	Das **war** schon einmal vorgekommen
Der Plan **ist** fehlgeschlagen	Was wird mit ihr passiert **sein** ?
Es **war** mir gelungen, ihn zu überzeugen	

The colloquial verb *klappen* 'succeed' takes *haben*, e.g. ***Hat**'s mit den Karten geklappt?* 'Did you manage to get the tickets?'

(iv) The verbs ***sein*** and ***bleiben***:

Sie **ist** früher Lehrerin gewesen
War er mal Diplomat gewesen?
Wir **sind** in Dessau geblieben
Sie wird dort geblieben **sein**

(b) All other verbs form their perfect tenses with *haben*

This includes the majority of German verbs. The most important fall into the following groups:

(i) TRANSITIVE VERBS, i.e. those which have a direct object in the accusative case (see **16.3**):

Ich **habe** sie gesehen

Er **hat** die Wohnung geputzt

Der Hund **hatte** die Mülltonne umgeworfen

Sie **hatte** mich geschlagen

Ich werde den Brief bis morgen früh geschrieben **haben**

A few compounds of *gehen* and *werden* are exceptions to this rule:

Er **ist** die Strecke abgegangen	*He paced out the distance*
Sie **ist** die Arbeit mit dem Schüler durchgegangen	She went through the work with the pupil
Er **ist** die Wette eingegangen	He made the bet
Ich **bin** ihn endlich losgeworden	*I have finally got rid of him*

(ii) REFLEXIVE VERBS:

Sie **hat** sich sehr gefreut	Ich **hatte** mir alles eingebildet
Ich **habe** mich schon erholt	Sie wird sich müde gelaufen **haben**
Ich **hatte** mich aus dem Zimmer gestohlen	

If verbs which form their perfect with *sein* are used with a reflexive pronoun in the dative (= 'each other', see **3.2.3**), the perfect is still

constructed with *sein*:

Sie **sind** sich ausgewichen	*They avoided each other*
Wir **sind** uns in der Stadt begegnet	*We met (each other) in town*

(iii) **Intransitive verbs** which **do not express motion or a change of state**. Most of these verbs denote a continuous action or state:

Ich **habe** gestern lange gearbeitet	Sie **hatte** dabei gepfiffen
Hast du in der Nacht gut geschlafen?	Sie **hatten** in Münster studiert
Dort **hat** jemand auf der Bank gesessen	Sie wird dort lange gewartet **haben**
Oben **hat** vorhin das Licht gebrannt	Gerhard wird ihr gesimst **haben**

The verbs ***liegen***, ***sitzen*** and ***stehen*** form their perfect tenses with *haben* in standard German in Germany, e.g. *ich **habe** gelegen*, *gesessen*, *gestanden*. However, in South Germany, *sein* is commonly used (i.e. *ich **bin** gelegen*, *gesessen*, *gestanden*) and this usage is accepted as standard in Austria and Switzerland.

(iv) Most **impersonal verbs**:

Es **hat** geregnet, geschneit, gehagelt	Es **hatte** nach Benzin gerochen
An der Tür **hat** es geklopft	Da **hatte** es einen Krach gegeben

Impersonal expressions with verbs which form their perfect tenses with *sein* form an exception to this rule, e.g. *Es **ist** mir kalt geworden*; *Wie **war** es Ihnen in Berlin gegangen?*

(v) The **modal auxiliaries**:

Ich **habe** es hinnehmen müssen	Wir **haben** es nicht gekonnt
Sie **hat** ihn besuchen wollen	Sie **hat** ihn nie gemocht

The **choice of auxiliary depends on the modal auxiliary**, not on the

verb it is used with, and so *haben* is used even if the main verb takes *sein*, e.g. *Ich* **hatte** *leider schon fahren müssen*; *Sie* **hat** *ihm sicher nicht begegnen wollen.*

(a) The use of *haben* and *sein* with the same verb

(i) **The choice of *haben* or *sein* depends on meaning**, i.e. it is not an automatic feature of a particular verb. Verbs which have more than one meaning can be used with *haben* or *sein* in the perfect if they have one meaning of the kind which requires *haben* for the perfect tense, and another which requires *sein*. This variation between *haben* and *sein* is most common with verbs which can be used transitively or intransitively. Thus, *fahren*, used as an intransitive verb of motion (= 'go'), forms its perfect with *sein*:

Sie **ist** nach Stuttgart gefahren Wir **sind** zu schnell gefahren

But when it is used transitively (= 'drive'), it takes *haben*:

Sie **hat** einen neuen Porsche gefahren Ich **habe** ihn nach Hause gefahren

More examples with other verbs:

Ich **habe** eine Mail bekommen *I have received an e-mail*

Das Essen **ist** mir gut bekommen *The meal agreed with me*

Er **hat** das Rohr gebrochen *He has broken the pipe*

Das Rohr **ist** gebrochen *The pipe has broken*

Sie **hat** auf Zahlung gedrungen *She has pressed for payment*

Wasser **ist** in das Haus gedrungen *Water has penetrated into the house*

Er **hat** ihr gefolgt *He has obeyed her*

Er **ist** ihr gefolgt *He has followed her*

Es **hat** in der Nacht gefroren *There was a frost in the night*

Der See **ist** gefroren *The lake has frozen*

Da **haben** Sie sich geirrt *You have made a mistake*

Er **ist** durch die Straßen geirrt *He roamed through the streets*

Sie **hat** ihn zur Seite gestoßen *She pushed him to one side*

Ich **bin** an den Schrank gestoßen *I bumped into the cupboard*

Du **hast** mir den Spaß verdorben *You have spoilt my fun*

Das Fleisch **ist** verdorben *The meat has gone bad*

Sie **hat** viel Benzin verfahren *She has used a lot of petrol/gas*

Wir **sind** nach diesem Grundsatz verfahren *We acted according to this principle*

Sie **hat** in Künstlerkreisen verkehrt *She moved in artistic circles*

Die Züge **sind** heute nicht verkehrt *The trains didn't run today*

Ich **habe** die Vase zerbrochen *I have broken the vase*

Die Vase **ist** zerbrochen *The vase has broken*

(ii) A few **verbs of motion** form their perfect with *sein* if they express movement from one place to another, but *haben* if they just refer to the activity as such, without any idea of getting somewhere:

Ich **habe** als junger Mann viel getanzt *I danced a lot when I was a young man*

Er **ist** aus dem Zimmer getanzt *He danced out of the room*

Sie **hat** den ganzen Morgen gesegelt *She's been sailing the whole morning*

Sie **ist** über den See gesegelt *She sailed across the lake*

This usage is more frequent in North Germany, and it is limited to a few verbs, i.e. *flattern*, 'flutter', *paddeln* 'paddle', *reiten* 'ride', *rudern*

'row', *schwimmen* 'swim', *segeln* 'sail', *tanzen* 'dance', *treten* 'step'.

10.4 The *werden*-passive and the *sein*-passive

German has two passives. These are easiest to think of as the ***WERDEN* -passive** and the ***SEIN* -passive**, according to whether they are formed by combining the auxiliary verb ***werden*** or ***sein*** with the **past participle**:

werden -passive	Die Stadt **wird zerstört**	Ich **wurde verletzt**
sein -passive	Die Stadt **ist zerstört**	Ich **war verletzt**

The *werden*- passive is often called the ***Vorgangspassiv*** in German, and the *sein* -passive the ***Zustandspassiv***. Their uses are dealt with in **Chapter 13**. The forms of the *werden*- passive are given in **Table 10.14**, and those of the *sein* -passive which are in current use are given in **Table 10.15**.

Table 10.14 The forms of the *werden* -passive

Present			**Perfect**				**Future**			
ich	werde	gelobt	ich	bin	gelobt	worden	ich	werde	gelobt	werden
du	wirst	gelobt	du	bist	gelobt	worden	du	wirst	gelobt	werden
es	wird	gelobt	es	ist	gelobt	worden	es	wird	gelobt	werden
wir	werden	gelobt	wir	sind	gelobt	worden	wir	werden	gelobt	werden
ihr	werdet	gelobt	ihr	seid	gelobt	worden	ihr	werdet	gelobt	werden
Sie	werden	gelobt	Sie	sind	gelobt	worden	Sie	werden	gelobt	werden
sie	werden	gelobt	sie	sind	gelobt	worden	sie	werden	gelobt	werden
Past			**Pluperfect**				**Future perfect**			
ich	wurde	gelobt	ich	war	gelobt	worden	ich	werde	gelobt	worden sein
du	wurdest	gelobt	du	warst	gelobt	worden	du	wirst	gelobt	worden sein
es	wurde	gelobt	es	war	gelobt	worden	er	wird	gelobt	worden sein
wir	wurden	gelobt	wir	waren	gelobt	worden	wir	werden	gelobt	worden sein
ihr	wurdet	gelobt	ihr	wart	gelobt	worden	ihr	werdet	gelobt	worden sein
Sie	wurden	gelobt	Sie	waren	gelobt	worden	Sie	werden	gelobt	worden sein
sie	wurden	gelobt	sie	waren	gelobt	worden	sie	werden	gelobt	worden sein

Table 10.15 Current forms of the *sein* -passive

Present			Past			Imperative
ich	bin	verletzt	ich	war	verletzt	Sei gegrüßt!
du	bist	verletzt	du	warst	verletzt	
es	ist	verletzt	es	war	verletzt	
wir	sind	verletzt	wir	waren	verletzt	
ihr	seid	verletzt	ihr	wart	verletzt	Seid gegrüßt!
Sie	sind	verletzt	Sie	waren	verletzt	Seien Sie gegrüßt!
sie	sind	verletzt	sie	waren	verletzt	

Further details on the passives:

• In the perfect tenses of the passive the **past participle of *werden*** has **no prefix *ge*** -, i.e. *worden*: *Das Haus ist 1845 gebaut* ***worden***.

• Imperative forms of the *werden*- passive, e.g. *werde gelobt!* are scarcely ever used. If a passive imperative is needed, the form with *sein* is used.

• Only the present and past tenses of the *sein*- passive, and the imperative, are at all frequently used in practice.

• As in other compound verb forms (see **19.1.2**), the participle in passive constructions is placed at the end of the clause in main clauses:

Das Haus wurde 1845 **gebaut** Das Kind war schwer **verletzt**

• In subordinate clauses the participle comes at the end, before the auxiliary, see **19.1.3**:

Ich weiß, dass das Haus vor zwanzig Jahren **gebaut** wurde

10.5 The subjunctive

The SUBJUNCTIVE mood presents what the speaker is saying as **not necessarily true**, whereas the INDICATIVE presents what is said as a **fact**.

Most modern German grammars and textbooks divide the forms of the German subjunctive into two major groups, which they refer to as

KONJUNKTIV I and *KONJUNKTIV* II. These terms make it simpler to explain their use because the traditional names (i.e. 'present' or 'past' subjunctive) suggest that their use is connected with time or tense differences, which is not the case. There are no English equivalents for these terms, and the German ones are used in this book. **Table 10.16** shows how these groupings are related to the traditional 'tenses' of the subjunctive:

Table 10.16 *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II*

Konjunktiv I	**'present' subjunctive**	es gebe
	'perfect' subjunctive	es habe gegeben
	'future' subjunctive	es werde geben
Konjunktiv II	**'past' subjunctive**	es gäbe
	'pluperfect' subjunctive	es hätte gegeben
	'conditional'	es würde geben

The subjunctive has compound tenses and passive forms like the indicative, formed in the same way with the auxiliaries *haben*, *sein* and *werden*. In this section we give information about the various forms of the subjunctive. All the uses of the subjunctive are treated in detail in **Chapter 14**.

10.5.1 *Konjunktiv I*

Table 10.17 The simple forms of *Konjunktiv I* (the 'present subjunctive')

		sein	*haben*	*können*	*werden*	*geben*	*machen*
Konjunktiv I **('present subjunctive')**	ich	sei	habe	könne	werde	gebe	mache
	du	sei(e)st	habest	könnest	werdest	gebest	machest
	es	sei	habe	könne	werde	gebe	mache
	wir	seien	haben	können	werden	geben	machen
	ihr	seiet	habet	könnet	werdet	gebet	machet
	Sie	seien	haben	können	werden	geben	machen
	sie	seien	haben	können	werden	geben	machen

(a) The simple form of *Konjunktiv I* is regular for all verbs except *sein*

For all verbs except *sein* the endings are added to the root of the verb without any other changes or irregularities, as illustrated for a range of typical regular and irregular verbs in **Table 10.17**. Further information:

(i) The second person singular and plural forms in - ***est*** and - ***et*** (e.g. *du sag **est***, *ihr sag **et***), are felt to be artificial and are rarely used.

(ii) For most verbs except *sein*, the only difference in practice between the simple form of *Konjunktiv I* and the present indicative is in the third person singular, which has the ending - ***e*** as opposed to the ending - ***t*** of the indicative.

(iii) There are no vowel changes in the second or third person singular of any strong or irregular verbs. Compare subjunctive: *es gebe*, *es fahre*, with indicative: *es gibt*, *es fährt*.

(iv) Verbs with a root in - *el* (see **10.2.1c**) usually drop the - *e*- of the root before the ending - *e*, e.g. *es segle*, *es lächle*, etc.

(b) Compound forms of *Konjunktiv I*

Compound perfect and future tenses of *Konjunktiv I*, and the *werden*- and *sein*- passive, are constructed in exactly the same way as in the indicative, using the subjunctive forms of the appropriate auxiliary verb, i.e. *haben*, *sein* or *werden*, together with the past participle or the infinitive. **Table 10.18** gives examples of all these forms in the third person singular, which is in practice the only form used.

Table 10.18 The compound forms of *Konjunktiv I*

perfect (with haben)	es **habe gekauft**
perfect (with sein)	es **sei gekommen**
future	es **werde kaufen**
werden-passive (present)	es **werde gekauft**
werden-passive (perfect)	es **sei gekauft worden**
werden-passive (future)	es **werde gekauft werden**
sein-passive	es **sei gekauft**

10.5.2 *Konjunktiv II*

There are three frequent forms of *Konjunktiv II*:

• The **simple form**, in one word, traditionally called the **past subjunctive**, see Tables 10.19–20, e.g. *ich* **wäre**, *wir* **müssten**. Details about its forms are given in **(a)** below.

• The '**pluperfect subjunctive**', see Table 10.21, formed from the past subjunctive of the auxiliary verb *haben* or *sein* and the past participle, e.g. *ich* **hätte gewartet**, *Sie* **wären gekommen**. More details are given in **(b)** below.

• The '**conditional**', see Table 10.22, formed from the past subjunctive of the auxiliary verb *werden* and the infinitive, e.g. *ich* **würde meinen**, *wir* **würden arbeiten**. More details are given in **(c)** below.

(a) The formation of the simple form of *Konjunktiv II*

Table 10.19 The simple form of *Konjunktiv II* (the 'past subjunctive')

	Verb	Past tense	Konjunktiv II
Regular weak verbs	kaufen	kaufte	kaufte
	machen	machte	machte
Regular strong verbs	bleiben	blieb	blieb **e**
	brechen	brach	br **ä** ch **e**
	fahren	fuhr	f **ü** hr **e**
	gehen	ging	ging **e**
	kommen	kam	k **ä** m **e**
	lassen	ließ	ließ **e**
	sprechen	sprach	spr **ä** ch **e**
	tragen	trug	tr **ü** g **e**
	tun	tat	t **ä** t **e**
	ziehen	zog	z **ö** g **e**
Strong verbs with an irregular past	helfen	half	h **ü** lf **e**
	stehen	stand	st **ü** nd **e**
	sterben	starb	st **ü** rb **e**

subjunctive			
Irregular verbs	sein	war	w **ä** r **e**
	haben	hatte	h **ä** tte
	werden	wurde	w **ü** rde
	dürfen	durfte	d **ü** rfte
	können	konnte	k **ö** nnte
	mögen	mochte	m **ö** chte
	müssen	musste	m **ü** sste
	wissen	wusste	w **ü** sste
	bringen	brachte	br **ä** chte
	denken	dachte	d **ä** chte

(i) As Table 10.19 illustrates with the form of the first or third person singular, the **simple form of *Konjuntiv II* is formed from the past tense** of the indicative in the following ways:

• For regular **weak verbs** it is **identical to the past indicative**.

• For most **strong verbs**, it is formed by taking the form of the **past tense**, **umlauting the vowel** if possible, and **adding** - ***e*** to the endings if possible (although this - *e* is often dropped in speech).

• A few **strong verbs** have an **irregular *Konjunktiv II*** form with a **different vowel** from that of the past tense. Only a few of these are commonly used nowadays.

• Some other common **irregular verbs** also have ***Umlaut*** in the simple *Konjunktiv II*, including *sein*, *haben*, and most of the modal auxiliaries. All these are given in Table 10.19.

The verb *brauchen* 'need' also often has a *Konjunktiv II* form with *Umlaut*, e.g. *ich br **ä** uchte*. This relatively recent usage is still not universally accepted as standard, but it is now the norm in speech and is increasingly seen in writing.

The simple *Konjunktiv II* forms for each individual **strong** or **irregular verb** are given in Table 10.23.

(ii) The **conjugation** of the simple form of *Konjunktiv II* with endings

to indicate person and number in agreement with the subject of the clause is given in **Table 10.20**, illustrated by examples from a selection of common verbs.

Table 10.20 The conjugation of the simple form of *Konjunktiv II*

		sein	*haben*	*können*	*werden*	*geben*	*machen*
Konjunktiv II **('past subjunctive')**	ich	wäre	hätte	könnte	würde	gäbe	machte
	du	wärest	hättest	könntest	würdest	gäbest	machtest
	es	wäre	hätte	könnte	würde	gäbe	machte
	wir	wären	hätten	könnten	würden	gäben	machten
	ihr	wäret	hättet	könntet	würdet	gäbet	machtet
	Sie	wären	hätten	könnten	würden	gäben	machten
	sie	wären	hätten	könnten	würden	gäben	machten

(b) The 'pluperfect subjunctive'

Like all perfect tenses in German, the compound perfect of *Konjunktiv II* (the 'pluperfect subjunctive') has one of the auxiliaries *haben* or *sein* (depending on the verb, see **10.3.2**) with the past participle, as illustrated in **Table 10.21**.

Table 10.21 The 'pluperfect subjunctive'

	Pluperfect subjunctive (with haben)	Pluperfect subjunctive (with sein)		
ich	hätte	gekauft	wäre	geblieben
du	hättest	gekauft	wärest	geblieben
es	hätte	gekauft	wäre	geblieben
wir	hätten	gekauft	wären	geblieben
ihr	hättet	gekauft	wäret	geblieben
Sie	hätten	gekauft	wären	geblieben
sie	hätten	gekauft	wären	geblieben

(c) The 'conditional'

The 'conditional' form of *Konjunktiv II* consists of a combination of the

past subjunctive of the auxiliary verb ***werden*** with the **infinitive**. Its forms are given in **Table 10.22**.

Table 10.22 The 'conditional' form of *Konjunktiv II* with *würd e*

	Conditional	
ich	würde	kaufen
du	würdest	kaufen
es	würde	kaufen
wir	würden	kaufen
ihr	würdet	kaufen
Sie	würden	kaufen
sie	würden	kaufen

The compound conditional form with *würde* is often used rather than the simple 'past subjunctive', so that, for example , *ich würde kommen* is often used rather than *ich käme*. Which form is used **depends on register, meaning and the individual verb involved**. Current usage is explained fully in **14.2.3**, but it can be summarized briefly here as follows:

(i) The simple *Konjunktiv II* forms of the weak verbs (which are in any case identical to the past indicative) and those of many less frequent strong verbs are only ever used in formal writing. Indeed, several simple forms of strong verbs (e.g. *ich flöge*, *ich röche*) are felt to be stilted (and even rather ridiculous) and are avoided entirely. These are indicated in **Table 10.23**.

(ii) On the other hand, with a few of the most common verbs, in particular ***haben***, ***sein***, ***werden*** and the modal auxiliaries, the simple form is much more frequent than the compound form with *würde* in both writing and everyday speech.

(d) Passive forms of *Konjunktiv II*

The *werden*- and *sein* -passive of *Konjunktiv II* are constructed in

exactly the same way as in the indicative, using subjunctive forms of the auxiliary verb *werden* or *sein* and the past participle:

werden -passive (past)	es **würde gekauft (werden)**
werden -passive (pluperfect)	es **wäre gekauft worden**
sein -passive	es **wäre gekauft**

10.6 Forms of strong and irregular verbs

Table 10.23 gives the PRINCIPAL PARTS, i.e. the **infinitive**, the **past tense** and the **past participle**, of all strong and irregular verbs, with the exception of the wholly irregular verbs and the modal auxiliaries whose forms are given in Tables 10.11 and 10.12.

The following should be noted when consulting Table 10.23:

• The **third person singular** of the **present tense** is given for those verbs which have **vowel changes** in the second and third person singular (see **10.2.1e/f**).

• The **simple past subjunctive** form of *Konjunktiv II* (see **10.5.2a**) is given for all verbs listed, but it is given **in italics if** it is **obsolete**, **archaic** or **rarely used**.

• The **auxiliary** used to form the **perfect tenses** (i.e. *haben* or *sein*, see **10.3.2**) is indicated by *hat* or *ist* alongside the past participle.

• **Less common alternative forms** are given in brackets after the commoner ones.

• In principle, **simple verbs** (i.e. without prefixes) **are given** if they exist, even if they are less frequent than compound verbs (e.g. *schwinden*, which is used less often than *verschwinden*). Compound verbs normally conjugate in the same way as the simple verb from which they are derived, but exceptions to this rule are given in the table.

Table 10.23 Principal parts of strong and irregular verbs

Infinitive 3rd person singular present	Past tense *Konjunktiv I*	Past participle
backen *bake* es bäckt (backt)	**backte (buk) büke**	hat **gebacken**
befehlen *command* es befiehlt *[fehlen* 'lack' is weak, i.e. *fehlte, gefehlt]*	**befahl** *beföhle (befähle*	hat **befohlen**
beginnen *begin*	**begann** begänne(begönne)	hat **begonnen**
beißen *bite*	**biss** bisse	hat **gebissen**
berg en *rescue; hide* esbirgt	**barg** bärge	hat **geborgen**
bersten *crack, burst* es birst (berstet)	**barst** bärste	hat **geborsten**
bewegen *induce [bewegen* 'move' is weak, i.e. *bewegte, bewegt]*	**bewog** *bewöge*	hat **bewogen**
biegen *bend; turn*	**bog** *böge*	hat **gebogen**
bieten *offer*	**bot** *böte*	hat **geboten**
binden *bind*	**band** *bände*	hat **gebunden**
bitten *ask, request*	**bat** *bäte*	hat **gebeten**
blasen *blow* es bläst	**blies** *bliese*	hat **geblasen**
bleiben *stay, remain*	**blieb** bliebe	ist **geblieben**
braten *fry, roast* es brä (bratet)	**briet** *briete*	hat **gebraten**
brechen *break* es brich	**brach** bräche	hat/ist **gebrochen**
brennen *burn*	**brannte** *brennte*	hat **gebrannt**
bringen *bring*	**brachte** brächte	hat **gebracht**
den ken *think*	**dachte** dächte	hat **gedacht**
dingen *hire, engage (e.g. servant)* *[dingen* is archaic, but	dingte(dang) *dingte/ dänge*	hat **gedungen**

sich ausbedingen 'make a condition' is still used in formal registers]		
dreschen *thresh* es drischt	**drosch** *drösche*	hat **gedroschen**
dringen *penetrate*	**drang** *dränge*	hat/ist **gedrungen**
empfehlen *recommend* es empfiehlt	**empfahl** *empföhle (empfähle)*	hat **empfohlen**
erkiesen *choose*	**erkor** *erköre*	hat **erkoren**
[Only the past tense and the past participle are now used, in elevated registers]		
erlöschen *go out (lights)* eserlischt	**erlosch** *erlösche*	ist **erloschen**
[Simple *löschen* 'extinguish', 'put out' is weak, i.e. *löschte, gelöscht]*		
erschallen *ring out*	**erscholl/erschallte** *erschallte*	ist **erschollen/ erschallt**
erschrecken *be startled* es erschrickt	**erschrak** *erschräke*	ist **erschrocken**
[Transitive *erschrecken* 'frighten' is weak, i.e. *erschreckte, erschreckt]*		
essen *eat* es isst	**aß** aBe	hat **gegessen**
fahren *go, drive* esfährt	**fuhr** führe	ist/hat **gefahren**
fallen *fall* esfällt	**fiel** fiele	ist **gefallen**
fangen *catch* esfängt	**fing** finge	hat **gefangen**
fechten *fight, fence* es ficht	**focht** (fechtete) *föchte*	hat **gefochten**
finden *find*	**fand** fände	hat **gefunden**
flechten *plait, braid* esflicht	**flocht** (flechtete) *flochte*	hat **geflochten**
fliegen *fly*	**flog** *floge*	ist/hat **geflogen**
fliehen *flee*	**floh** *flohe*	ist **geflohen**

flieBen *flow*	**floss** *flosse*	ist **geflossen**
fragen *ask* erfragt(lit., *reg.* frägt)	**fragte** *(arch., lit.* frug) *fragte*	hat **gefragt**
fressen *eat (of animals)* esfrisst	**fraß** *fräße*	hat **gefressen**
frieren *freeze*	**fror** *fröre*	hat/ist **gefroren**
gären *ferment*	**gor/gärte** *göre/gärte*	hat/ist **gegoren/ gegärt**
[The weak forms are usual when *gären* is used figuratively]		
gebärengivebi$_r$th es gebiert (gebärt)	**gebar** *gebäre*	hat **geboren**
geben *give* esgibt	**gab** gäbe	hat **gegeben**
gedeihen *thrive*	**gedieh** *gediehe*	ist **gediehen**
gehen ***go***	**ging** ginge	ist **gegangen**
gelingen *succeed*	**gelang** gelänge	ist **gelungen**
gelten *be valid* esgilt	**galt** *gälte (gölte)*	hat **gegolten**
genesen recover(el ev.	**genas** *genäse*	ist **genesen**
genießen *enjoy*	**genoss** *genösse*	hat **genossen**
geschehen *happen* es geschieht	**geschah** geschähe	ist **geschehen**
gewinnen *win*	**gewann** *gewänne/ gewönne*	hat **gewonnen**
gießen *pour*	**goss** *gösse*	hat **gegossen**
gleichen *resemble*	**glich** gliche	hat **geglichen**
gleiten *glide, slide*	**glitt** *glitte*	ist **geglitten**
[begleiten 'accompany' is weak, i.e. *begleitete, begleitet]*		
glimmen *glimmer* (elev.)	**glomm/glimmte** *glömme/glimmte*	hat **geglommen/ geglimmt**
graben *dig* esgräbt	**grub** *grübe*	hat **gegraben**
greifen *grasp*	**griff** griffe	hat **gegriffen**
halten *hold; stop* es **hält**	**hielt** hielte	hat **gehalten**
[The compound verbs *beinhalten* 'comprise'		

and *haushalten* 'be economical' are weak]		
hängen *hang(¡ntrans.)*	**hing** hinge	hat **gehangen**
[The transitive verb *hängen* 'hang' is weak, i.e. *hängte, gehängt]*		
hauen *hew, cut*	**haute** (hieb) *haute (hiebe)*	hat **gehauen** *(coll.* gehaut)
[The strong form *hieb* is literary and used in the meaning 'hew, cut (with a sword)']		
heben *lift*	**hob** (hub) *höbe (hübe)*	hat **gehoben**
[hub and hübe are occasional in literary registers, especially with *anheben* 'commence']		
heißen *be called*	**hieß** hieße	hat **geheißen**
helfen *help* eshilft	**half** hülfe (hälfe)	hat **geholfen**
kennen *know*	**kannte** kennte	hat **gekannt**
klimmen *climb*	**klomm** (klimmte) *klömme*	hat **geklommen** (geklimmt)
klingen *sound*	**klang** klänge	hat **geklungen**
kneifen *pinch*	**kniff** *kniffe*	hat **gekniffen**
kommen *come*	**kam** käme	ist **gekommen**
kriechen *creep, crawl*	**kroch** *kröche*	ist **gekrochen**
küren *choose*	**kürte** *(elev.* kor) *kürte/ köre*	hat **gekürt** *(elev.* gekoren)
laden *load; invite* es lädt (ladet)	**lud** *lüde*	hat **geladen**
[ladet is regional, and only used in the sense 'invite', or with the compound *einladen]*		
lassen *leave; let* es lässt	**NeB** ließe	hat **gelassen**
[veranlassen 'cause' is		

weak, i.e. *veranlasste, veranlasst]*		
laufen *run* es läuft	**lief** liefe	ist/hat **gelaufen**
leiden *suffer*	**litt** litte	hat **gelitten**
[verleiden 'spoil' is weak, i.e. *verleidete, verleidet]*		
leihen *lend; borrow*	**lieh** liehe	hat **geliehen**
lesen *read* es liest	**las** läse	hat **gelesen**
liegen *lie*	**lag** läge	hat **gelegen**
lügen *tell lies*	**log** löge	hat **gelogen**
mahlen *grind*	**mahlte** *mahlte*	hat **gemahlen**
meiden *avoid*	**mied** miede	hat **gemieden**
melken *milk* es melkt (milkt)	**melkte** (molk) melkte	hat **gemolken** (gemelkt)
messen *measure* esmisst	**maß** *mäße*	hat **gemessen**
misslingen *fail*	**misslang** misslänge	ist **misslungen**
nehmen *take* esnimmt	**nahm** nähme	hat **genommen**
nennen *name, call*	**nannte** *nennte*	hat **genannt**
pfeifen *whistle*	**pfiff** *pfiffe*	hat **gepfiffen**
preisen *praise*	**pries** priese	hat **gepriesen**
[The compound *lobpreisen* can be weak (e.g. *lobpreiste)* or strong (e.g. *lobpries)]*		
quellen *gush, well up* esquillt	**quoll** *quölle*	ist **gequollen**
raten *advise* es rät	**riet** riete	hat **geraten**
reiben *rub*	**rieb** *riebe*	hat **gerieben**
reißen *tear*	**riss** risse	hat/ist **gerissen**
reiten *ride (a horse)*	**ritt** *ritte*	hat/ist **geritten**
rennen *run*	**rannte** *rennte*	hat/ist **gerannt**
riechen *smell*	**roch** *röche*	hat **gerochen**
ringen *wrestle*	**rang** *ränge*	hat **gerungen**
rinnen *flow, trickle*	**rann** *ränne (rönne)*	ist **geronnen**
rufen *call, cry*	**rief** riefe	hat **gerufen**

salzen *salt*	**salzte** *salzte*	hat **gesalzen** (gesalzt)
saufen *drink (of animals); booze* es säuft	**soff** *söffe*	hat **gesoffen**
saugen *suck*	**saugte/sog** *saugte/söge*	hat **gesaugt/ gesogen**
[Only weak forms are used in technical language, and with *staubsaugen* 'vacuum-clean']		
schaffen *create*	**schuf** schüfe	hat **geschaffen**
[schaffen is weak *(schaffte, geschafft)* in the meaning 'manage', 'work']		
schalten *switch*	**schaltete** *schaltete*	hat **geschaltet**
[In Austria the strong participles *angeschalten* and *eingeschalten* are often used]		
scheiden *separate; depart*	**schied** schiede	hat/ist **geschieden**
scheinen *seem; shine*	**schien** schiene	hat **geschienen**
scheißen *shit*(vulg.)	**schiss** *schisse*	hat **geschissen**
schelten *scold* esschilt	**schalt** *schölte*	hat **gescholten**
scheren *shear, clip*	**schor** *schöre*	hat **geschoren**
[scheren is weak in the meaning 'concern', and in *sich scheren* 'bother about', 'clear off']		
schieben *push, shove*	**schob** *schöbe*	hat **geschoben**
schießen *shoot*	**schoss** *schösse*	hat/ist **geschossen**
schinden *flay, ill-treat*	[schindete/schund]	hat **geschunden**
[There is uncertainty about the past tense forms *schindete* and *schund,* although both are found]		

schlafen *sleep* es schläf	**schlief** schliefe	hat **geschlafen**
schlagen *hit, beat* es schlägt	**schlug** schlüge	hat **geschlagen**
schleichen *creep*	**schlich** *schliche*	ist **geschlichen**
schleifen *grind, sharpen* *[schleifen* is weak (i.e. *schleifte, geschleift)* in the meaning 'drag']	**schliff** *schliffe*	hat **geschliffen**
schließen *shut*	**schloss** schlösse	hat **geschlossen**
schlingen *wind, wrap*	**schlang** *schlänge*	hat **geschlungen**
schmeißen *throw, chuck(coll.)*	**schmiss** schmisse	hat **geschmissen**
schmelzen *melt* esschmilzt(schmelzt) [The weak forms are colloquial and only used if *schmelzen* is used transitively]	**schmolz** (schmelzte) schmölze	hat/ist **geschmolzen** (geschmelzt)
schneiden *cut*	**schnitt** schnitte	hat **geschnitten**
schreiben *write*	**schrieb** schriebe	hat **geschrieben**
schreien *shout, scream*	**schrie** *schriee*	hat **geschrie(e)n**
schreiten *stride*	**schritt** schritte	ist **geschritten**
schweigen *not speak*	**schwieg** schwiege	hat **geschwiegen**
schwellen *swell* esschwillt *[schwellen* is weak (i.e. *schwellte, geschwellt)* when used transitively]	**schwoll** *schwölle*	ist **geschwollen**
schwimmen *swim*	**schwa mm** *schwömme (schwämme)*	ist/hat **geschwommen**
schwinden *disappear*	**schwand** schwände	ist **geschwunden**
schwingen *swing*	**schwang** *schwänge*	hat **geschwungen**
schwören *swear*	**schwor(lit.** schwur) *schwüre (schwöre)*	hat **geschworen**
sehen see essieht	**sah** sähe	hat **gesehen**
senden *send*	**sendete/sandte** sendete	hat **gesendet/ gesandt**

[The weak forms *sendete, gesendet* are mainly used in technical senses (i.e. ='broadcast')]		
sieden boil(elev.; S.G.)	**siedete/sott** *siedete (sötte)*	hat **gesotten** (gesiedet)
singen *sing*	**sang** sänge	hat **gesungen**
sinken *sink*	**sank** *sänke*	ist **gesunken**
sinnen meditate(elev.)	**sann** *sänne (sönne)*	hat **gesonnen**
sitzen *sit*	**saß säße**	hat **gesessen**
spalten *split, cleave*	**spaltete** *spaltete*	hat/ist **gespaltet** (gespalten)
[gespalten is used mainly as an adjective, e.g. *dasgespaltene Deutschland]*		
speien *spit, spew(elev.)*	**spie** spiee	hat **gespie(e)n**
spinnen *spin; be stupid*	**spann** *spönne (spänne)*	hat **gesponnen**
sprechen *speak* es spricht	**sprach** spräche	hat **gesprochen**
sprießen *sprout* (elev.)	**spross** *sprösse*	ist **gesprossen**
springenjump	**sprang** spränge	ist **gesprungen**
stechen *prick, sting* es sticht	**stach** *stäche*	hat **gestochen**
stehen *stand*	**stand** stünde (stände)	hat **gestanden**
stehlen *steal* es stiehlt	**stahl** *stähle (stöhle)*	hat **gestohlen**
steigen *climb; rise*	**stieg** stiege	ist **gestiegen**
sterben *die* es stirbt	**starb** stürbe	ist **gestorben**
stieben *fly up (like dust)* (elev.)	**stob** (stiebte) *stöbe*	ist **gestoben** (gestiebt)
stinken *stink*	**stank** *stänke*	hat **gestunken**
stoßen *bump; push* es stößt	**stieß** stieße	ist/hat **gestoßen**
streichen *stroke*	**strich** striche	ist/hat **gestrichen**
streiten *quarrel*	**stritt** stritte	hat **gestritten**
tragen *carry, wear*	**trug** trüge	hat **getragen**

esträgt		
[beantragen 'apply' and *beauftragen* 'commission' are weak]		
treffen *meet; hit* es trifft	**traf** träfe	hat **getroffen**
treiben *drive, drift*	**trieb** triebe	ist/hat **getrieben**
treten *step* estritt	**trat** träte	ist/hat **getreten**
triefen drip(elev.)	**triefte/troff** *tröffe*	hat **getrieft** (getroffen)
trinken *drink*	**trank** tränke	hat **getrunken**
trügen *deceive*	**trog** *tröge*	hat **getrogen**
tun *do*	**tat** täte	hat **getan**
verbleichen *fade*	**verblich** *verbliche*	**istverblichen**
[Simple *bleichen* 'bleach' is weak (i.e. *bleichte, gebleicht),* as is *erbleichen* 'turn pale']		
verderben *spoil* esverdirbt	**verdarb** *verdürbe*	**hat/istverdorben**
verdrießen vex**(**elev.)	**verdross** *verdrösse*	**hatverdrossen**
vergessen *forget* esvergisst	**vergaß** vergäße	hat **vergessen**
verlieren *lose*	**verlor** verlöre	hat **verloren**
verschleißen *wear out*	**verschliss** *verschlisse*	ist/hat **verschlissen**
verzeihen *excuse*	**verzieh** verziehe	**hatverziehen**
wachsen *grow* es wächst	**wuchs** wüchse	ist **gewachsen**
wägen *weigh (one's words)*	**wog/wägte** *wöge*	hat **gewogen/ gewägt**
[Simple *wägen* is archaic; *erwägen* 'consider' only has strong forms: *erwog, erwogen]*		
waschen *wash* es wäscht	**wusch** *wüsche*	hat **gewaschen**
weben *weave*	**webte** (wob) webte	hat **gewebt** (gewoben)

[The strong forms are only used in literary German in figurative senses]		
weichen *yield, give way*	**wich** wiche	ist **gewichen**
[In the meaning 'soften' *weichen* is weak, as are *einweichen* 'soak' and *aufweichen* 'make soft']		
weisen *point*	**wies** wiese	hat **gewiesen**
wenden *turn*	**wandte/wendete** wendete	hat **gewandt/ gewendet**
[Irregular *wandte, gewandtare* more frequent, except in the sense 'turn over', 'turn round' (e.g. *das Auto, das Heu wenden).* The compounds *entwenden* and *verwenden* are more often regular]		
werben *recruit; advertise* eswirbt	**warb** *würbe*	hat **geworben**
werfen *throw* eswirft	**warf** *würfe*	hat **geworfen**
wiegen *weigh*	**wog** *wöge*	hat **gewogen**
[wiegen is weak (*wiegte, gewiegt)* in the meaning 'rock' (cradle, etc.)]		
winden *wind, twist*(elev.)	**wand** *wände*	hat **gewunden**
winken *wave*	**winkte** *winkte*	hat **gewinkt** *(coll.* gewunken)
wringen *wring (clothes) (N.G.)*	**wrang** *wränge*	hat **gewrungen**

ziehen *pull; move*	**zog** zöge	hat/ist **gezogen**
zwingen *force*	**zwang** zwänge	hat **gezwungen**

The infinitive and the participles

This chapter deals with the uses of the NON-FINITE forms of the verb, i.e. the INFINITIVE and the PRESENT and PAST PARTICIPLES, as shown in **Table 11.1**.

Table 11.1 Non-finite forms of the verb

Infinitive	Present participle	Past participle
kauf **en**	kauf **end**	**ge** kauft
sing **en**	sing **end**	**ge** sung **en**
wander **n**	wander **nd**	**ge** wander **t**
aufmach **en**	aufmach **end**	auf **ge** mach **t**
bestell **en**	bestell **end**	bestell **t**

As explained in **10.1.1e**, these forms of the verb do not have endings to show agreement with the subject, or to express other categories of the verb such as tense and mood. They are used to form the compound tenses and the passive (see **10.3** and **10.4**), and they occur in a number of constructions which depend on an element in a full clause with a finite verb. The various non-finite forms and their uses are treated in the following sections of this chapter:

- The **forms** of the **infinitive** (section **11.1**)
- The uses of the **infinitive with *zu*** (section **11.2**)
- The uses of the **infinitive without *zu*** – the 'bare infinitive' (section **11.3**)
- Infinitives used as **nouns** (section **11.4**)
- The uses of the **present** and **past participles** (section **11.5**)
- Equivalents of the **English 'ing'-form** in German (section

11.6)

11.1 Forms of the infinitive

11.1.1 The simple and compound infinitive

(a) The simple infinitive is the basic form under which verbs are listed in dictionaries

(see **10.1.1**). For most verbs it ends in - *en* (e.g. *komm* ***en***, *mach* ***en***, *seh* ***en***), but a few verbs have an infinitive ending in - ***n***, i.e. *sein*, *tun* and verbs with a stem ending in - *el* and - *er* (see **10.2.1c**)

(b) Compound infinitives

The infinitive of the auxiliaries ***haben***, ***sein*** and ***werden*** can be combined with the **past participle** of a verb to form compound infinitives:

perfect infinitive (with *haben*)	gesehen haben
perfect infinitive (with *sein*)	angekommen sein
werden-passive infinitive	verletzt werden
sein-passive infinitive	verletzt sein
perfect passive infinitive	verletzt worden sein

The perfect infinitive is formed with *haben* or *sein* in accordance with the rules given in **10.3.2**. For the use of *sein* or *werden* in the passive, see **13.2.2**. The German perfect infinitive is used to show that an action took place before the time of speaking, not unlike in English:

Sie muss das Buch **lesen**	*She must* **read** *the book*
Sie muss das Buch **gelesen haben**	*She must* **have read** *the book*

11.1.2 The infinitive with and without *zu*

In some constructions in German, the **infinitive** is accompanied by the **particle *zu***, whilst in others a so-called **bare infinitive** is used, without *zu*:

Ich riet ihr zum Arzt **zu gehen**	*I advised her* **to go** *to the doctor*
Ich konnte nicht zum Arzt **gehen**	*I couldn't* **go** *to the doctor*

Constructions with *zu* (which are more frequent) are explained in section **11.2**. Constructions with the bare infinitive are treated in section **11.3**.

(a) *zu* with simple verbs and verbs with inseparable prefixes

zu comes immediately before the verb and is separated from it in writing:

Sie fing an **zu schreiben**	Wir kamen auf dieses Thema **zu sprechen**
Ich war bereit **zu verhandeln**	Es gefiel mir mich mit ihr **zu unterhalten**

(b) *zu* with verbs with a separable prefix

zu is placed **between the prefix** and t **he verb**. The whole is written as a single word (see **10.2.1i**):

Sie hatte vor ihn **anzurufen**	Es war schön euch **wiederzusehen**
Es wäre wohl besser ihr davon **abzuraten**	Sie wusste mit diesem Mann **umzugehen**

If a verb has a separable prefix followed by an inseparable one, as in *anvertrauen, zu* comes between the prefixes:

Es fällt mir nicht ein mich ihm **anzuvertrauen**	*I wouldn't dream of confiding in him*

Although the verb *missverstehen* is inseparable, the *zu* is placed **after** the prefix, i.e. *misszuverstehen*. A few other verbs with the prefix *miss-* also allow this as an alternative, e.g. *zu missachten* or (less commonly) *misszuachten*, see **20.7.3**.

(c) *zu* with compound infinitives

zu is placed between the participle and the auxiliary *haben*, *sein* or *werden*:

Er verleugnet es sie betrogen **zu** haben	*He denies having deceived her*
Ihr gefällt es nicht betrogen **zu** werden	She doesn't like being deceived
Sie behauptete betrogen worden **zu** sein	*She claimed to have been deceived*

zu is also placed between the main verb and a modal auxiliary:

Es freut mich Sie hier begrüßen zu dürfen	*It is a pleasure to be able to welcome you here*

11.2 The infinitive with *zu*

Infinitives with *zu* are typically used in reduced clauses, called the ***Infinitivsatz*** in German. These clauses can depend on a noun, a verb or an adjective in a full clause within the same sentence. The infinitive with *zu* comes at the end of its clause, i.e. in the same position as the finite verb in a subordinate clause (see **19.1.1c**):

Er fing an **heftig zu weinen**	*He began to cry bitterly*
Er gab mir die Erlaubnis **in Berlin**	He gave me permission to stay in

zu bleiben	Berlin
Es ist nicht schwer **eine fremde Sprache zu lernen**	*It is not difficult to learn a foreign language*

If there is more than one infinitive, *zu* is repeated with each, e.g. *Es begann **zu** blitzen und **zu** donnern und **zu** stürmen.*

For the use of the comma with infinitive clauses, see **21.5.3**.

11.2.1 The position of infinitive clauses with *zu*

(a) The infinitive clause is usually quite separate from the main clause

i.e. it is not enclosed inside the clause it depends on (see **19.8.1**), and it follows the verb at the end of that clause:

Sie hatten beschlossen **vor dem Rathaus zu warten**

(*not* *Sie hatten vor dem Rathaus zu warten beschlossen)

Wir hatten vor **im Urlaub nach Rom zu fliegen**

(*not* *Wir hatten im Urlaub nach Rom zu fliegen vor)

… weil er sich bemüht hat **rechtzeitig fertig zu sein**

(*not* *… weil er sich rechtzeitig fertig zu sein bemüht hat)

There are a few **exceptions** to this general rule, when the infinitive clause can (or must) be enclosed within the clause which it depends on. These are:

(i) with the **semi-auxiliary verbs** (see **11.2.4**):

… bevor sein Duft ihn **zu ersticken drohte** (*Süßkind*)

Seine Brutalität ist nicht mehr **zu ertragen gewesen**

(*Wickert*)

(ii) Enclosure is possible with **some other common verbs**, although it is never obligatory. It is more typical of formal, especially written registers:

Dass sie ihn **entdeckt zu haben** glaubte, war ein Beweis dafür, dass … (*Süßkind*)

(*or*: Dass sie glaubte ihn entdeckt zu haben, …)

Du hast mir **das zu tun** versprochen

(*or*: Du hast mir versprochen das zu tun)

Verbs often used with this construction are *anfangen*, *beginnen*, *glauben*, *hoffen*, *meinen*, *trachten*, *vermögen*, *versuchen*, *wagen*, *wünschen*. Other verbs are sometimes used in this way in very formal registers, but constructions like this can sound stilted.

With these verbs, too, the infinitive clause can be incorporated in the main clause by splicing the object of the infinitive into it, if there is only the finite verb and its subject in the main clause:

Er wagte **die Reise** aus diesem Grunde nicht **abzubrechen**	*He didn't dare to break his journey for that reason*
Diesen Vorgang wollen wir zu **erklären** versuchen	*We want to try to explain this series of events*

This construction is also typical of formal registers.

(b) Infinitive clauses depending on relative clauses

The German equivalent of English constructions such as 'a man whom I tried to kill' typically has the infinitive clause enclosed within the relative clause, e.g. *ein Mann, den ich* **zu töten** versuchte. Other examples:

… die Person, **deren Gesicht** ich **zu** … *the person whose face I had tried*

erraten versucht hatte (*Frisch*)	*to recognize*
… kein Mann, **den zu beseitigen** eine Revolution gelohnt hätte (*Spiegel*)	*… not a man whom it would have been worth a revolution to get rid of*

Alternatively, if there is only a simple infinitive clause (i.e. one consisting only of *zu* plus the infinitive), it can follow the finite verb, e.g. *ein Mann, den er versuchte* **zu töten**.

11.2.2 Infinitive clauses as the subject or object of a verb

(a) Infinitive clauses are often used in German as the subject of a verb

These usually correspond in English to an infinitive clause or to a clause with an 'ing'-form. In many contexts there is a choice in English between using the 'ing'-form or the infinitive with 'to', but in German only an infinitive clause is possible, as German does not use present participles in the way the 'ing'-form is used in English (see **11.6**). The finite verb has the ending of the third person singular:

Ihn zu überzeugen wird nicht leicht sein	*To convince him/Convincing him won't be easy*
So etwas zu erlauben ist unerhört	To allow/allowing that kind of thing is outrageous
Ihr Ziel ist **einen Roman zu schreiben**	*Her aim is to write/writing a novel*

(b) If a subject infinitive clause is short, it can, optionally, be used without *zu*

This is most frequent with the verb *sein* and in set phrases:

Lange Auto (zu) fahren ist sehr anstrengend	*Driving a car for long periods is very strenuous*

Irren ist menschlich	*To err is human*

(c) A subject infinitive clause is sometimes anticipated by *es* in the preceding main clause

(see **3.6.2e** for further details of when this *es* is used):

Es war mir nicht möglich **ihm früher zu mailen**	*It wasn't possible for me to e-mail him earlier*
Ihm steht **(es)** nicht zu **ein Urteil zu fällen**	*It's not up to him to pass judgement*

(d) The infinitive clause with *zu* is often used as the object of a verb

Like subject infinitive clauses, these can correspond to an English infinitive clause or a clause with an 'ing'-form:

Ich hoffe **dich bald wiedersehen zu können**	*I hope to be able to see you again soon*
Ich gebe zu **das gesagt zu haben**	I admit having said that
Ich habe vor **sie morgen zu besuchen**	*I intend to visit them/visiting them tomorrow*

(e) A following object infinitive clause is sometimes anticipated by *es*

(see **3.6.2f** for details of when this *es* is used)

Ich konnte **es** kaum ertragen **ihn so leiden zu sehen**	*I could hardly bear to see him suffer like that*
Sie hat **(es)** versäumt **die Miete zu zahlen**	*She missed paying the rent*

(f) Infinitive clauses depending on verbs which govern a prepositional object

Infinitive clauses can be linked to a prepositional object in the preceding clause, and these are often anticipated by a prepositional adverb (i.e. *da(r)* + preposition). See **16.5.14** for further details on this construction:

Bitte achten Sie beim Verlassen des Zuges **darauf**, Ihre persönlichen Gegenstände mitzunehmen (*train announcement*)	*When leaving the train please be sure to take your personal possessions with you*
Ich erinnere mich (**daran**), sie voriges Jahr in Bremen gesehen zu haben	*I remember having seen her in Bremen last year*

11.2.3 The subject of the verb in infinitive clauses

(a) Infinitives in infinitive clauses all have a subject

As infinitives are non-finite forms of the verb, they do not have endings in agreement with a subject, but when they are used in a clause they do have a subject, which is the person or thing mentioned in the preceding clause that is carrying out the action expressed by the infinitive.

When an infinitive clause is used as the **object of a verb**, there are some contexts where the **subjec** t **of the main verb** is the **subject of the infinitive**. Thus, in the following sentence, it is Christian, the **subject** of ***versprechen***, who has to be understood as the **subject** of ***mitzunehmen***:

Christian versprach Ellen sie mitzunehmen	*Christian promised Ellen to take her with him*

There are other contexts, though, where the **object of the main verb** is

the **subject of the infinitive**. In the following example, it is Ellen, the **object** of ***bitten***, who is understood as the **subject** of ***mitzunehmen***:

Christian bat Ellen ihn mitzunehmen	*Christian asked Ellen to take him with her*

What is understood to be the subject of the infinitive typically depends on the sense of the verbs involved and the context. In practice English and German generally agree on whether the subject or object of the main verb is to be understood as the subject of the infinitive. More examples:

Anna gab zu **sich** geirrt zu haben	*Anna admitted having made a mistake* (Anna – the **subject** of *zugeben* – was mistaken)
Sabine hat **Manfred** geraten die Ausstellung zu besuchen	*Sabine advised Manfred to see the exhibition* (Manfred – the **object** of *raten* – should see the exhibition)

However, **there are a few contexts where there are differences between German and English**, as explained in the remainder of this section.

(b) German verbs whose object cannot act as the subject of a following infinitive clause

In practice, there are far fewer verbs in German which allow an object to be taken as the subject of a following infinitive. In particular, it is **not possible with most verbs of wishing, desiring, saying, knowing, thinking** and the like. With these **a *dass* - or *wenn* -clause has to be used in German**:

Sie will, **dass ich mit ihr gehe**	*She wants me to go with her*
Ich möchte nicht, **dass es irgendein Missverständnis gibt**	I don't want there to be any misunderstanding
Ich erwarte, **dass sie bald nach**	I expect her to move to Flensburg

Flensburg umzieht	soon
Sage ihm doch, **dass er warten soll**	Tell him to wait, though
Ich wusste, **dass es ein Irrtum war**	I knew it to be a mistake
Mir wäre es lieber, **wenn Sie hier nicht rauchen würden**	*I would prefer you not to smoke here*

These verbs cannot be used in the passive with a following infinitive clause, either, and a subordinate clause has to be used in German where English has this type of construction:

Man erwartet, **dass sie bald nach Flensburg umzieht**	*She is expected to move to Flensburg soon*
Man sagte uns/Uns wurde gesagt, **dass wir warten sollten**	*We were told to wait*

(c) With some verbs the subject of the infinitive is not specified

It has to be understood as ***man***, i.e. 'person or persons unknown' who are to carry out the action expressed by the infinitive. This construction is chiefly used with verbs of ordering or requesting and the like. In equivalent contexts English typically uses a clause with a passive, a passive infinitive or a noun construction:

Der Präsident hat angewiesen **alle Universitäten zu schließen**	*The president instructed that all the universities be closed*
Er ordnete an **die Gefangenen zu entlassen**	He ordered the prisoners to be released
Helmut befahl früh **aufzubrechen**	*Helmut ordered an early start*

Other typical verbs used in constructions of this kind are: *anregen*, *auffordern*, *beantragen*, *befehlen*, *befürworten*, *bitten*, *drängen*, *eintreten*, *empfehlen*, *ersuchen*, *fordern*, *raten*, *veranlassen*, *verlangen*, *warnen*.

(d) Cases of uncertainty

With some verbs **the subject or the object of the main verb** can act as the subject of the infinitive, and the listener or reader has to resolve the ambiguity from the context. In English a subordinate clause is normally used with verbs of this kind, and there is no ambiguity:

Er schlug mir vor **das Zimmer aufzuräumen**	*He suggested to me that I/he/we should tidy the room up*

Other verbs which are used like this are *anbieten*, *einreden*, *zusichern*.

(e) An infinitive clause is used in German after some verbs denoting mental processes

The English equivalents typically have a subordinate clause:

Er behauptete (glaubte, meinte, war überzeugt) **mich gesehen zu haben**	*He maintained* (*believed, thought, was convinced*) *that he had seen me*

This construction is more usual in writing than in speech, where a subordinate clause (typically with the conjunction *dass* omitted, see **17.2.1b**) is often preferred, e.g. *Er meinte, er hätte mich gesehen/dass er mich gesehen hätte*.

11.2.4 Infinitive clauses with 'semi-auxiliary' verbs

Some verbs have a closer link with a following infinitive clause than others. Their main role is to modify the meaning of the verb used in the infinitive in some way, rather like a modal auxiliary verb (see **Chapter 15**), and it is useful to think of them as '**semi-auxiliary**' verbs.

English has more 'semi-auxiliary' verbs of this kind than German. The natural German equivalent to many of these is a construction with an adverb, e.g. *Ich spiele* ***gern*** *Tennis 'I* ***like*** *to play tennis', Ich sah sie* ***zufällig*** *in der Stadt* 'I **happened** to see her in town'. A survey of these equivalences is given in **7.4.4**.

A feature of these German semi-auxiliary verbs is that **they always enclose the infinitive** in dependent clauses or compound tenses, and they are also often incorporated with a dependent infinitive clause (see **11.2.1a**):

… da er den eben Angekommenen **zu erkennen schien**

… als das Boot **zu kentern drohte**

Sie hat uns **zu verstehen gegeben**, dass sie morgen kommt

The most important verbs which can be used as semi-auxiliaries in German are given below. Many of them have other uses and meanings.

bekommen 'get':

Und wenn ich dich **zu fassen bekomme** …	*And if I lay hands on you, …*

belieben 'like', 'wish'. Nowadays archaic except ironically:

Sie **belieben zu scherzen**	*You must be joking*

bleiben 'remain'. The following infinitive has the force of a passive:

Die Gesetzesvorlage **bleibt** noch **zu diskutieren**	*The draft bill still remains to be discussed*

For the use of *bleiben* with a **bare infinitive**, see **11.3.1f**.

brauchen 'need'. In this sense it only occurs with a negative (or with *nur* or *bloß*). This is the most common negative to *müssen* (see **15.5.1c**):

Du **brauchst** nur **anzurufen**, und ich komme sofort	*You only need to call and I'll come straight away*
eine Sprache, die sie nie **zu erlernen brauchten** (*Spiegel*)	*a language which they never needed to learn*

In colloquial speech, *brauchen* is commonly used without *zu* (see **11.3.1a**): *Ich brauche nicht hingehen.*

The infinitive is used rather than the past participle in the perfect tenses (see **11.3.2a**): *Du hättest nicht hin(zu)gehen* ***brauchen*** and in this context it is considered acceptable to omit *zu*.

drohen 'threaten'. The subject is typically inanimate in this use:

Oskars Herz **drohte** zu Stein **zu werden** (*Grass*)	*Oskar's heart threatened to turn to stone*

geben 'give'. Used mainly with *denken*, *erkennen*, *verstehen*:

… weil sie uns **zu verstehen gab**, dass sie bald kommen würde	*… because she gave us to understand that she would be coming soon*

es gibt 'there is' (see **16.2.5**) is also used as a semi-auxiliary, e.g… . *weil es hier wenig* **zu trinken gibt**.

gedenken 'propose'. It is restricted to formal registers:

die Zahl der Truppen, die die Nato nach Afghanistan **zu schicken gedenkt**	*the number of troops which NATO proposes to send to Afghanistan*

gehen 'go'. The use of *gehen* as a semi-auxiliary is colloquial. It expresses a possibility and the infinitive has passive force (see **13.4.5c**):

Die Uhr **geht** nicht **zu reparieren**	*The clock can't be repaired*

For the use of *gehen* with a bare infinitive, see **11.3.1e**.

haben 'have' expresses necessity or obligation. It is an alternative to *müssen* or *sollen*:

Was **habe** ich **zu bezahlen** ?	*What have I got to pay?*
Ich **habe** mehrere Mails **zu schreiben**	I have several e-mails to write
Sie **haben** hier nichts **zu suchen**	*You have no business here*

With some verbs (especially *tun*), this use of *haben* is idiomatic and there is little sense of obligation or necessity:

Das **hat** mit dieser Sache nichts **zu tun**	*That's got nothing to do with this matter*
Das **hat** wenig **zu bedeuten**	*That doesn't mean very much*

For the use of *haben* with a bare infinitive, see **11.3.1f**.

kommen 'come' expresses a (chance) result:

Es war nicht meine Absicht, dass wir auf dieses Thema **zu sprechen kamen**	*It was not my intention for us to get onto this subject*
Wir arrangierten es so, dass ich neben ihr **zu sitzen kam**	*We arranged it so that I came to sit next to her*

For the use of *kommen* with a bare infinitive, see **11.3.1e**.

pflegen 'to be accustomed to' is restricted to formal registers:

Am Abend dann studierte Stefan die Sonntagsergebnisse der Bundesliga, wie er es immer zu tun pflegte (*HMP*)	*So in the evening Stefan studied the Sunday Bundesliga results, as he always used to do*

scheinen 'seem'

Ihm **schien** es **zu gefallen**	*He seemed to like it*
Das Dorf Lidice, wohin die Spuren der beiden Attentäter **zu führen schienen**, wurde zerstört (*Presse*)	*The village of Lidice, where the tracks of the two assassins seemed to lead, was destroyed*

sein 'be', as a semi-auxiliary, is the equivalent of *können* (or sometimes *müssen* or *sollen*). The following infinitive has the force of a passive, see **13.4.5a**:

Ist der Direktor heute **zu sprechen**?	*Can I see the manager today?*
Die Fahrausweise **sind** auf	*The tickets are to be shown on*

Verlangen **vorzuzeigen**	*demand*
Das Haus **ist zu verkaufen**	*The house is for sale*

For the use of *sein* with a bare infinitive, see **11.3.1e**.

stehen has a similar sense to *sein*, and the following infinitive also has the force of a passive. It is used mainly with *befürchte n*, *erwarten* and *hoffen*:

Es **steht zu erwarten**, dass er bald nachgibt	*It can be expected that he will soon give in*

suchen 'try', 'seek' is restricted to formal registers:

eine Ordnung, die die selbständige militärische Betätigung des Adels **einzuschränken suchte** (*Bumke*)	*a decree which sought to limit the independent military activities of the nobility*

versprechen 'promise'. In this sense, *versprechen* refers to an involuntary action with something desirable in the offing. The subject is usually inanimate:

Das Wetter **verspricht schön zu werden**	*The weather promises to be nice*
Wir sind froh, weil das Unternehmen **zu gedeihen verspricht**	*We are happy because the enterprise promises to prosper*

As a full verb, in the sense of 'make a promise', *versprechen* is used with a separated infinitive clause and the subject is always **animate**, e.g. *Der Arzt* **versprach mir sofort zu kommen**.

verstehen 'be able to', 'know how to':

Sie war in Verhältnisse geschleudert worden, mit denen sie nicht **umzugehen verstand** (*Fleißer*)	*She had been catapulted into circumstances which she didn't know how to cope with*

wissen 'know how to'. In this sense *wissen* is similar to *verstehen*:

Er **weiß mit den Leuten umzugehen**	*He knows how to deal with people*
Wie soll zurechtkommen, wer sich in das Gegebene nicht **zu schicken weiß** ? (*Wolf*)	*How is anyone going to manage who doesn't know how to come to terms with reality?*

11.2.5 The infinitive with *zu* after adjectives

In some infinitive constructions after *sein* used with an adjective, the **subject** of *sein* has to be understood as the **object** of the infinitive:

Diese Aufgabe ist **einfach zu lösen**	*This problem is simple to solve*
Er ist **leicht zu überzeugen**	He is easy to convince
Diese Frage ist **schwer zu beantworten**	*This question is difficult to answer*

This construction is common in English, but it is only possible with very few adjectives in German, i.e. ***einfach***, ***interessant***, ***leicht***, ***schwer***, ***schwierig***. In German, too, the construction is only possible if the verb takes an accusative object, i.e. it cannot occur with verbs like *helfen* which govern a dative object. These other English constructions have quite different German equivalents:

Es war schön, sie zu kennen (*not * Sie war schön zu kennen*)		*She was nice to know*
Meiner Schwester zu helfen war schwierig	}	*My sister was difficult to help*
Es war schwierig, meiner Schwester zu helfen (*not * Meine Schwester war schwierig zu helfen*)		
Zum Trinken war der Kaffee zu heiß (*not * Der Kaffee war zu heiß zu trinken*)		*The coffee was too hot to drink*

In English adjectives like this can be used attributively (i.e. in front of a noun), with an infinitive depending on them, e.g. 'That is a **difficult** question **to answer**'. There is no comparable construction in German, and other constructions are used:

Diese Frage zu beantworten ist schwer Das ist eine schwer zu beantwortende Frage	}	*That is a difficult question to answer*
Es ist ein leicht erreichbarer Ort		*It's an easy place to reach*
Es war dumm diese Frage gestellt zu haben		*That was a silly question to have asked*

11.2.6 The infinitive with *zu* after a preposition

An infinitive with *zu* can be used after four prepositions, i.e. ***um***, ***ohne***, ***(an)statt*** and ***außer***. These constructions have special meanings and are the equivalent of adverbial clauses. These clauses are always preceded by a comma in writing, see **21.5.3b**.

(a) *um … zu* has a number of uses

(i) It can express purpose, corresponding to English 'in order to'. It is the equivalent of a clause introduced by *damit* (see **17.5.1**):

Ich konnte nichts tun, **um** ihn **zu** beruhigen	*I couldn't do anything to reassure him*
Er zündete das Haus an, **um** die Versicherung **zu** kassieren	He set fire to the house (in order) to collect on the insurance
Da war kein Wasser, **um** das Feuer **zu** löschen	*There was no water to put the fire out*

The *um* is sometimes omitted, both in elevated **and** colloquial registers, if the notion of purpose is clear from the context, e.g.

Ich konnte nichts tun ihn zu beruhigen.

(ii) It is used after an adjective qualified by *zu* or *genug*:

Er ist **zu jung**, **um** alles **zu** verstehen	*He is too young to understand everything*
Er ist alt **genug**, **um** alles **zu** verstehen	*He is old enough to understand everything*

um is sometimes omitted, especially in colloquial speech, e.g. *Er ist zu jung alles zu verstehen.*

um…zu can only be used in this context if the subject of the two clauses is the same. If it is different, the conjunction ***als dass*** has to be used (see **17.5.3**), e.g. *Er ist zu jung/nicht alt genug,* **als dass wir es ihm erklären können**.

(iii) It can be used simply to link clauses, as an equivalent to *und*:

Er betrat die Gaststätte, **um** sie nach kurzer Zeit wieder **zu** verlassen	*He went into the restaurant, only to leave it again after a short time*

This construction is limited to formal writing and it has been criticized by stylists, as it could be misunderstood to imply purpose and then sound nonsensical, e.g. *Karl ging nach Australien, um dort von einem Auto überfahren zu werden.*

(b) *ohne … zu* corresponds to English 'without' followed by an 'ing'-form

Er sollte den Gegner ablaufen, **ohne** ihn per Foul vom Ball **zu** trennen (*HMP*)	*He ought to run down his opponent without getting the ball off him by fouling him*
Er verließ das Haus, **ohne** gesehen **zu** werden	*He left the house without being seen*

With a change of subject, the conjunction ***ohne dass*** is used (see

17.7g), e.g. *Er verließ das Haus, ohne dass Gertrud ihn sah.*

(c) *(an)statt … zu* corresponds to English 'instead of' followed by an 'ing'-form

Er hat gespielt, **(an)statt zu** arbeiten	*He played instead of working*
Die Mädchen sollten sich schämen, dass sie einfach abgehauen sind, **statt** Hilfe **zu** holen (*BrZ*)	*The girls should be ashamed that they just ran off instead of fetching help*

A clause with (*an*) *statt dass*, e.g. *Er hat gespielt, (an)statt dass er gearbeitet hat*, is an alternative to this construction. No change of subject is possible with either (*an*) *statt zu* or (*an*) *statt dass*.

(d) *außer … zu* corresponds to English 'except', 'apart from' or 'besides' with an infinitive

Was konnten sie tun, **außer zu** protestieren? (*Zeit*)	*What could they do except protest?*

Using *außer* followed by an infinitive with *zu* is quite recent. A common alternative is to use the preposition *außer* with an infinitive noun, e.g. *Sie tat nichts außer Schlafen.* With a different subject, a clause with the conjunction *außer dass* is used (see **17.7b**).

11.2.7 Differences between English and German in the use of infinitives

The infinitive with *zu* is used in fewer types of construction than English infinitives, and it is useful to be aware of the most frequent German equivalents for these English constructions. Typically, German often uses constructions with clauses where English can use an infinitive.

(a) English ‘for’ followed by an infinitive

English ‘for’ is often used with a noun or a pronoun together with an infinitive. The most usual German equivalent is a construction with a relative clause, or an adverbial clause, with the conjunction to be used depending on the sense:

Hier sind ein paar Formulare, die Sie ausfüllen sollen	*Here are a few forms for you to fill in*
Dort war niemand, mit dem wir hätten reden können	There was nobody there for us to talk to
Ihr lag es sehr daran, dass er die Stelle annahm	She was very keen for him to take the job
Er wartete darauf, dass sie ankam	He was waiting for her to arrive
Sie bringt die Fotos, damit wir sie uns ansehen können	She’s bringing the photographs for us to look at
Sie muss schon sehr krank sein, wenn ihre Mutter den Arzt angerufen hat	*She must be very ill for her mother to have phoned the doctor*

In a limited number of contexts German can use a noun with *fü r*, or a noun in the dative in the main clause:

Es ist Zeit für uns loszugehen	*It is time for us to leave*
Es war ihm unmöglich, das auch nur zu verstehen	*It was impossible for him even to understand that*

(b) English ‘with’ followed by an infinitive

If English ‘with’ is followed by a noun or a pronoun and an infinitive the German equivalent, depending on the sense, can be a subordinate clause with *da* or *weil*, a main clause with *und*, or a relative clause:

Da ich diesen Aufsatz schreiben muss, werde ich wohl nicht ins Kino gehen können	*With this essay to write, I probably shan’t be able to go to the cinema*
Sie waren nur auf der Durchreise in	They were just passing through Munich, with no more than an hour

München und konnten dort nur ein paar Stunden verbringen Auch der Sonntag, an dem sie nicht ins Büro ging, verging irgendwie	or two to spend *Even Sunday, with no office to go to, passed somehow for her*

(c) English infinitives in indirect statements and questions

e.g. 'He told me **how to do it**'. In German a subordinate clause is used, often with a modal auxiliary verb such as *sollen*, *müssen* or *könne n*:

Er sagte mir, wie ich es machen sollte Ich weiß nicht, was ich tun soll/muss Woher weiß man, welchen Knopf man drücken soll?	*He told me how to do it* I don't know what to do *How do you tell which button to press?*

(d) English infinitives used after a noun

e.g. 'the person **to apply to**'. A relative clause is used in German:

Ich möchte ein Paar Handschuhe, die zu meinem Wintermantel passen das Einzige, was man tun kann	*I want a pair of gloves to go with my winter coat* *the only thing to do*

Constructions like this are especially common after superlatives:

Er war der Erste (der Letzte, der beste Spieler), der gekommen ist	*He was the first (the last, the best player) to come*

11.2.8 Other uses of the infinitive with *zu*

(a) In comparative phrases with *als*

zu can be omitted, although it is more usual for it to be included:

Du kannst nichts Besseres tun **als zu Hause (zu) bleiben**

Man sollte lieber erst alles gründlich besprechen **als sofort (zu) streiten**

(b) In exclamations

These are similar to the corresponding English construction:

Und zu denken, dass es ihr nichts bedeutet hat!	*And to think it didn't mean anything to her!*
Ach, immer hier zu bleiben!	*Oh, to stay here for ever!*

(c) In small ads

Zwei-Zimmer-Wohnung ab 1. Mai zu vermieten	*Two-room apartment to let from May 1st*

11.3 The infinitive without *zu*

11.3.1 Verbs used with a 'bare' infinitive without *zu*

A few common verbs are followed by a so-called **'bare' infinitive**, without *zu*, e.g.:

Ich muss morgen nach Bochum ***fahren***

Sie will diese Briefe morgen **schreiben**

Ich weiß, dass sie diese Briefe morgen **schreiben** will

Sie hat diese Briefe heute **schreiben** wollen

The 'bare' infinitive is placed in final position at the end of the clause, and enclosed in subordinate clauses and compound tenses (for further details see **19.1**). The following verbs are used with a 'bare' infinitive:

(a) The modal auxiliaries – *dürfen, können, mögen, müssen, sollen, wollen*

(see **Chapter 15**):

Sie **darf** heute nicht **ausgehen**	Ich **musste** heute früh **aufstehen**
Wir **können** es nicht **verhindern**	Er wird mir nicht **helfen wollen**

In colloquial speech, ***brauchen*** is often used with a bare infinitive, e.g. *Sie brauchen heute nicht hingehen.* However, this is not universally considered standard, and *brauchen* is still most often used with *zu* in writing: *Sie brauchen heute nicht hinzugehen.* However, in the perfect tense the bare infinitive is accepted, with the infinitive used rather than a past participle (see **11.3.2a**), e.g. *Das hättest du wirklich nicht (zu) lesen brauchen.*

(b) The verbs of perception – *fühlen, hören, sehen, spüren*

Ich **sah** ihn ins Zimmer **kommen**	*I saw him come into the room*
Sie **hörte** das Kind **weinen**	She heard the child crying
Er **fühlte** sein Herz **klopfen**	He felt his heart beat(ing)
Ich **spürte** seinen Einfluss **wachsen**	*I sensed how his influence was growing*

With these verbs, a clause with *wie* is an alternative to the infinitive construction:

Ich **hörte**, **wie** das Kind weinte	Ich **spürte**, **wie** sein Einfluss wuchs

Ich **sah**, **wie** der Polizist sich nach
dem alten Mann umsah

This alternative is more frequent in certain contexts, in particular if the sentence is long or complex, with the verbs *fühlen* and *spüren*, and in less formal registers.

(c) *lassen*

lassen with a bare infinitive has two principal meanings:

(i) 'let', 'allow':

Er **ließ** mich das Buch **behalten**	*He let me keep the book*
Lass sie doch **hereinkommen** !	*Do let her come in!*

In this sense *lassen* is often used reflexively with a similar force to a passive construction (see **13.4.6**):

Das **lässt sich** leicht **ändern**	*That can easily be changed*
Das Buch **lässt sich** leicht **lesen**	*The book is easy to read*

(ii) 'cause', 'make':

Sie **ließ** den Schlosser die Tür **reparieren**	*She had the locksmith fix the door*
Die Nachricht **ließ** ihn **erblassen**	The news made him turn pale
Er **ließ** sich die Haare **schneiden**	*He had his hair cut*

lassen is never followed by a passive infinitive, but in both meanings the infinitive after *lassen* can express the sense of a passive:

Er **lässt** die Bäume **fällen**	*He has the trees felled*
Er **ließ** sich **sehen**	He allowed himself to be seen
Sie **ließen** die Autobahnen von den Gefangenen **bauen**	*They had the motorways built by the prisoners*

(d) tun

The use of *tun* with a bare infinitive is typical of colloquial speech:

Er **tut** ja immer noch **essen**	*He's still eating*
Tust du mich auch **verstehen** ?	Do you understand me?
Ich **täte** gern ins Kino **gehen**	*I would like to go to the cinema*

This usage is widespread and very common in spoken German, but is generally considered to be non-standard, and it is only acceptable in writing to allow an emphasized verb to be placed first in the sentence:

Bewundern tue ich ihn nicht, aber er imponiert mir doch	*I don't admire him, but he does impress me*
Aber **schmerzen tat** es darum nicht weniger (*Reuter*)	*But it was no less painful for all that*

(e) Some verbs of motion – *gehen, kommen, fahren, schicken*

The verb in the infinitive expresses the purpose of going:

Während ich **öffnen ging**, … (*Andersch*)	*While I went to open the door, …*
Kommst du heute **schwimmen** ?	*Are you coming swimming today?*
Er **fährt** immer vormittags **einkaufen**	He always goes shopping in the mornings
Sie hat den Opa **einkaufen geschickt**	*She sent grandad shopping*

This usage is typical of colloquial speech, but it is not restricted to informal registers. In everyday speech, the past and perfect tenses of ***sein*** can also be used with a bare infinitive to mean 'go':

Ich **war** heute Morgen **schwimmen**	*I went swimming this morning*
Er **ist einkaufen gewesen**	*He went/has been shopping*

schicken can also be used with *zu* and an infinitive: *Sie hat den Großvater geschickt, Kartoffeln und Gemüse zu kaufen.* This is most usual if the infinitive clause is fairly long.

(f) *bleiben, finden* and *haben* followed by a verb of position

Er **blieb** im Zimmer **sitzen**	*He stayed sitting in the room*
Sie **ist** an den Ampeln **stehen geblieben**	She stopped at the lights
Er **hat** sein Auto vor der Tür **stehen**	He's got his car at the door
Sie **hat** einen Bruder in Köln **wohnen**	She's got a brother living in Cologne
Sie **fand** das Buch auf dem Boden **liegen**	*She found the book lying on the floor*

(i) *stehen bleiben* 'stop' and *sitzen bleiben* 'repeat a year' (at school) have a distinct meaning and can be written as single words (see **20.6.3c**).
(ii) For *finden* with the present participle, see **11.6.5c**.
(iii) *haben* is also used with a bare infinitive in a few fixed expressions with adjectives, e.g. *Du hast gut / leicht reden* 'It's all very well for you to talk'.

(g) *heißen* 'order', *helfen, lehren, lernen*

These verbs can be followed by a bare infinitive or by an infinitive with *zu*:

Sie **hieß** ihn **schweigen**	*She bade him be silent*
Er **hieß** seine Truppen die Burg bis zum letzten Mann **zu verteidigen**	*He ordered his troops to defend the castle to the last man*
… und jetzt **hilf** mir **anpacken**	*… and now give me a hand*
(*Remarque*)	He helped Carla to open the wine

Er **half** Carla die Weinflaschen **zu öffnen** (*Horbach*)	bottles
Sie **lehrte** mich **kochen**	She taught me to cook
Sie **lehrte** mich Suppe **zu kochen**	She taught me how to make soup
Er **lernte** beim Militär Russisch **sprechen/zu sprechen**	*He learnt to speak Russian in the army*

(i) This sense of *heißen*, i.e. 'command', is typical of formal literary registers and can sound old-fashioned. In the sense 'mean', *heißen* is always followed by an infinitive without *zu*, see **(h)** below.

(ii) *kennen lernen* 'meet', 'get to know' has developed a distinct lexical meaning and can be written as a single word (see **20.6.3c**).

The construction with *zu* tends to be used with longer and more complex infinitive clauses. However, the bare infinitive is preferred if the alternative is an awkward construction, e.g.:

Es geht darum, die seit vierzig Jahren geforderte Freiheit der osteuropäischen Völker verwirklichen zu helfen (*FR*) (i.e. *not* **zu** *verwirklichen zu helfen*)	*It is a matter of helping the peoples of Eastern Europe to realize the freedom which has been demanded for forty years*

(h) A few other verbs in certain constructions or idioms

(i) With *machen* in some idioms, i.e. *von sich reden machen* 'become a talking point' and *jdn. etwas glauben machen* 'convince sb. of sth.', and when used with a few other verbs, i.e. *jdn. gruseln*, *lachen*, *schwindeln*, *weinen*, *zittern machen* 'make sb. have the creeps, laugh, feel dizzy, cry, tremble'.

(ii) A bare infinitive is used as the complement of *heißen* 'be (the equivalent of)', 'mean' and *nennen* 'call':

Das **heißt lügen**	*That amounts to lying*
Das **hieße** wieder von vorne **anfangen**	*That would mean starting again from scratch*
Das **nennst** du höflich **sein** !	*You call that being polite!*

heißen in the meaning 'command' is followed by a bare infinitive **or** an infinitive with *zu*, see **(g)** above.

(iii) *legen* is followed by a bare infinitive in the idiom *sich schlafen legen* 'go to bed', e.g. *Ich legte mich schlafen.*

11.3.2 The use of the infinitive for a past participle

The infinitive is used rather than a past participle in the perfect tenses of some verbs which are followed by a bare infinitive, e.g. *Sie hat kommen **wollen*** (not *gewollt*), see **15.3.2a**. This so-called *Ersatzinfinitiv* is used with the following verbs:

(a) the modal auxiliaries

Er hat heute ausgehen **dürfen**	Wir hätten Ihnen helfen **können**
Er hat ihn sehen **müssen**	Sie hätte es machen **sollen**
Karl hatte Sie sehen **wollen**	

brauchen also forms its perfect tenses with the infinitive rather than the past participle, whether used with an infinitive with *zu* or with a bare infinitive (see **11.3.1a**), e.g. *Wir haben nicht (zu) warten **brauchen***.

The past participle is sometimes used with these verbs in spoken German, e.g. *Sie hat arbeiten gemusst*, *gekonnt*, *gewollt*, etc. These forms are regarded as incorrect.

(b) *lassen*

Sie hat den Schlosser die Tür **reparieren lassen** Er hat sich die Haare

schneiden lassen

Er hat sie in das Zimmer **kommen lassen**

The infinitive of *lassen* is generally used rather than the past participle, but it is occasionally heard in the sense of 'leaving something somewhere', e.g. *Ich habe Kaffee und Kuchen stehen gelassen* (more usual: *stehen lassen*), and with the combinations *fallen lassen*, *liegen lassen*, etc.

(c) *sehen, hören* and other verbs of perception

With *sehen* and *hören*, the norm is to use the infinitive:

Ich habe sie hereinkommen **sehen** *I saw her come in*

Sie hatte ihn nicht kommen **hören** *She hadn't heard him come*

The past participle can also be used with these verbs, e.g. *Sie hatte ihn nicht kommen* **gehört**, but this is less frequent.

fühlen and *spüren* are now almost exclusively used with a past participle, e.g. *Sie hat die Katastrophe kommen* **gefühlt**.

(d) helfen, heißen and other verbs used with a bare infinitive

Both the infinitive and the past participle are accepted with all these verbs, but there are differences in frequency of usage.

(i) With *helfen*, the infinitive is more usual than the past participle:

Sie hat ihm den Koffer **tragen helfen** (*also common*: **tragen geholfen**)

(ii) With *heißen* the infinitive and the past participle are almost equally common:

Wer hat dich **kommen heißen** / **geheißen** ?

(iii) With other verbs, especially *lehren* and *lernen*, the past participle is the norm:

Er hat Chinesisch **sprechen gelernt** (*unusual*: **sprechen lernen**)

In subordinate clauses the auxiliary precedes these double infinitives: *Er sagte, dass sie es* **hätte** machen sollen /..., dass sie den Koffer **hat** tragen helfen, etc. (see **15.1.4d** and **19.1.3b**).

11.3.3 Other uses of the bare infinitive

(a) in commands, in place of an imperative

The use of the infinitive with the force of a command is particularly frequent in official language and instructions, see also **14.1.3a**:

Nicht rauchen! Bitte anschnallen!	*No smoking! Fasten seat-belts!*

(b) in isolation, especially in elliptical questions, wishes and the like

Wie? Alles vergessen und vergeben?	*What? (Am I supposed to) forgive and forget?*
Wozu sich weiter bemühen?	Why (should we) bother further?
Was möchtest du jetzt? – Schlafen bis Mittag!	*What would you like to do now? – Sleep till lunchtime!*

11.4 Infinitives used as nouns

11.4.1 Making and using nouns from the infinitive of verbs

The infinitive of almost any verb can be used as a noun in German without any further changes. They are always **neuter**, see **1.1.6e**, and they are spelled with a capital letter, e.g. ***das Schlafen***, ***das Sehen***, ***das Sprechen***.

(a) Infinitival nouns often correspond to English 'ing'-forms used as nouns

Ich hörte das laute **Bellen** eines Hundes	*I heard the loud barking of a dog*
Nach monatelangem **Warten** erhielt sie die Nachricht von seinem Erfolg	After waiting for months she received news of his success
Das **Mitnehmen** von Hunden ist polizeilich verboten	Bringing dogs in is forbidden by law
die Kunst des **Schreibens**	*the art of writing*

(b) The pronoun *sich* is usually omitted in infinitival nouns from reflexive verbs

(i) This is especially the case if the use of the infinitive as a noun is well-established and frequent, e.g. *das Benehmen* 'behaviour' (from *sich benehmen* 'behave').
(ii) However, *sich* may be included to avoid ambiguity, e.g. *die Kunst des Sichäußerns* 'the art of expressing oneself'. *das Äußern* could mean something different.
(iii) *sich* tends to be included with forms which have not yet become established usage, e.g. *dieses ständige Sichumschauen*

'this continual looking round', *das meditative Sichannähern an Gott* 'coming closer to God through meditation', *das Sichnichtbegnügenkönnen* (*Süßkind*) 'not being able to be satisfied'.

There is often uncertainty in how to spell nouns from reflexive verbs, and spellings like *das sich Äußern* are sometimes seen, although they are incorrect.

(c) Infinitival nouns are not used in the plural

This is because, like the English 'ing'-form, they simply express the action denoted by the verb. However, a few established forms, with extended meanings, can be used in the plural, see **11.4.3**.

(d) Compound infinitival nouns

Infinitival nouns can be compounded with the object or another part of the clause, e.g.:

das Zeitunglesen *reading the newspaper* das Rückwärtsfahren *reversing*

das Schlafengehen *going to bed*

If there are several words in these additional elements, they are normally written with hyphens, e.g.:

dieses ständige Mit-sich-selbst-Beschäftigen (*SWF*) das Auf-die-lange-Bank-Schieben

The first word, the infinitive, and any nouns in the combination are all spelled with capital letters.

(e) Widespread use of infinitival nouns is typical of

written German

They are especially frequent in technical registers, e.g.:

In der Bundesrepublik beginnt sich diese Basis humanen **Miteinanderlebens**, **Untereinanderaussprechens** und **Miteinander-wirkens** aufzulösen (*FAZ*)	*In the Federal Republic this basic principle of living together humanely, freely exchanging ideas and co-operating is beginning to dissolve*

11.4.2 Infinitival nouns with prepositions

The preposition is fused with the appropriate form of the definite article in these constructions (see **4.1.1c**).

(a) *am* + infinitival noun

am is used with an infinitival noun to express continuous action (see also **12.5**):

Paula ist **am Tanzen**	*Paula is dancing*
Der Ölpreis ist wieder **am Sinken**	The price of oil is dropping again
Während die Piraten noch auf der Insel **am Feiern** sind, läuft die „Neptun" wieder aus mit Kurs auf Spanien (*Zeit*)	*While the pirates are still celebrating on the island, the 'Neptune' sets sail for Spain again*

This usage was originally a North-West German regionalism, but its use has now spread, even in written German, although it is not fully accepted as standard.

(b) *beim* + infinitival noun

This usually corresponds to an English progressive tense (see **12.5**),

English 'on' with an 'ing'-form, or an adverbial time clause with 'when' or 'as':

Beim Erwachen am Morgen erschrak ich eine Sekunde lang (*Frisch*)	*On waking up/When I woke up in the morning I was frightened for an instant*
Die Brücke war so dicht mit vierstöckigen Häusern bebaut, dass man **beim Überschreiten** den Fluss nicht zu Gesicht bekam (*Süßkind*)	*The bridge was so densely built up with four-storey houses that you couldn't see the river as you crossed it*

(c) *ins* + infinitival noun

This combination is used with *geraten* or *kommen* to form phrasal verbs denoting the beginning of an action:

Der Ball geriet/kam **ins Rollen**	*The ball started rolling*
Der Turm kam/geriet **ins Schwanken**	The tower started to sway
Der Wagen kam **ins Schleudern**	*The car went into a skid*

(d) *zum* + infinitival noun

(i) *zum* with an infinitival noun expresses purpose, often corresponding to English 'for' with an 'ing'-form or to an infinitive with 'to':

Zum Fußballspielen ist der Garten viel zu klein	*The garden is much too small for playing football in*
Ich gebrauche den Computer vor allem **zum Spielen** von Games	I use the computer more than anything for playing games
Der Kaffee ist zu heiß **zum Trinken**	*The coffee is too hot to drink*

(ii) Some combinations of infinitival nouns with *zum* are

idiomatic:

Das ist doch **zum Lachen**, **zum Kotzen**, **zum Verrücktwerden**	*But that's laughable, enough to make you sick, enough to drive you mad*

(iii) ***bis zum*** with an infinitival noun is used for 'until':

Bitte bewahren Sie den Fahrschein **bis zum Verlassen** des Bahnhofs	*Please retain your ticket until you leave the station*

(iv) Combinations of infinitival nouns with *zum* with *bringen* or *kommen* form phrasal verbs expressing the completion of an action:

zum Halten bringen/kommen	*bring/come to a stop*
zum Kochen bringen/kommen	*bring/come to the boil*

11.4.3 Infinitival nouns with extended meanings

Some infinitival nouns have lost their link to the verb they came from and no longer simply express the action denoted by it but have developed additional meanings, so that most of them can be used in the plural. Some common examples:

das Andenken	*souvenir*	das Schrecken	*terror*
das Benehmen	behaviour	das Unternehmen	enterprise
das Dasein	existence	das Verbrechen	crime
das Einkommen	income	das Vergnügen	pleasure
das Essen	meal	das Vermögen	wealth
das Gutachten	reference	das Versprechen	promise
das Guthaben	credit balance	das Vorhaben	*intention*
das Leben	*life*		

11.5 The present and past participles

Aside from the use of the past participle to form the perfect tenses and the passive (see **10.3–10.4**), the German participles are chiefly employed as adjectives (see **11.5.1**) or in participial clauses (see **11.5.2**).

In English, the two participles are usually called the **PRESENT PARTICIPLE** (e.g. *lesend*, *überwältigend*, etc.), and the **PAST PARTICIPLE** (e.g. *gestellt*, *geworfen*, etc.). These terms are rather misleading, as the participles do not necessarily refer to present or past time, and they are often referred to as *das erste Partizip* and *das zweite Partizip* in German (or simply *Partizip I* and *Partizip II*).

11.5.1 The participles used as adjectives

(a) Most German present and past participles can be used as adjectives

This is their most frequent use outside the compound tenses:

die **schreienden** Vögel	mein **verlorener** Schirm
das **kochende** Wasser	der **gehasste** Feind

(b) Participles can be used as nouns

In this respect they are like other adjectives (see **6.2**).

die **Streikenden**	*the people on strike*	die **Gehasste**	*the detested woman*
der **Sterbende**	*the dying man*	das **Hervorragende**	*the outstanding thing*

ein bitterer Kampf zwischen *a bitter struggle between the haves*

Habenden und Habenichtsen, zwischen **Überfütterten** und **Zukurzgekommenen** (*Zeit*)	*and the have-nots, between the overfed and those who have come off badly*

Many such participles used as nouns have taken on special meanings, e.g. *der/die Abgeordnete* 'member of parliament', *der/die Vorsitzende* 'chairperson', etc. More of these are given in **6.2.3**.

(c) Participles can be used as adverbs

In this respect they are like other adjectives. They mainly become adverbs of manner or viewpoint, see **7.4.1c**:

Er hat die Sache **überraschend** schnell erledigt	*He settled the matter surprisingly quickly*
Sie rannten **schreiend** davon, als sie ihn sahen (*Süßkind*)	They ran off screaming when they saw him
Die alte Frau ging **gebückt** zum Rathaus hin	*The old woman was walking with a stoop towards the town-hall*

(d) Participles are often compounded

Adjectives are typically compounded with the object of the verb, or with a qualifying adverb. These compounds can then also be used as nouns or adverbs in the same way as simple participles. They are especially frequent in written German:

Vancouver ist eine Stadt von **atemberaubender** Schönheit	*Vancouver is a breathtakingly beautiful city*
die **Arbeitsuchenden**	the people looking for work
ein **weichgekochtes** Ei	a soft-boiled egg
Tiefgefrorenes	*frozen food*

(e) Present participles can be used adjectivally with an

accompanying *zu*

e.g. *das **abzufertigende** Gepäck* 'the baggage for checking'. This is an adjectival form of the construction with *sein* and an infinitive with *zu* expressing possibility or necessity, i.e. *Das Gepäck ist abzufertigen* (see **11.2.4**). As in that construction the participle has passive force:

ein nicht **zu übersehender** Fehler	*a mistake which cannot be overlooked*
ihre **anzuerkennende** Leistung	her achievement which must be acknowledged
ein **Auszubildender**	*a trainee*

As the last example shows, these forms, too, can be used as nouns. This construction is very frequent in formal registers, especially in officialese.

(f) The extended participial phrase

In German, a participle used adjectivally can be expanded leftwards by adding objects and/or adverbials. In this way, what in English would be a phrase or a relative clause placed **after** the noun can appear in German as an extended adjectival phrase placed **before** the noun:

Die **um ihre eigenen Arbeitsplätze fürchtenden** Stahlarbeiter wollten nicht streiken (*FR*)	*The steelworkers, who were afraid for their own jobs, did not want to strike*
Ich habe dieses von meinem Vetter **warm empfohlene** Buch mit Genuss gelesen	I enjoyed reading this book which was strongly recommended to me by my cousin
Wegen Überproduktion entlassene Arbeiter demonstrierten im Fabrikhof	Workers who had been laid off on account of overproduction were demonstrating in the factory yard
eine **von allen echten Demokraten zu begrüßende**	*a development which must be welcomed by all true democrats*

Entwicklung

These extended adjectival phrases can be made into nouns, e.g. *das wirklich Entscheidende* 'what is really decisive', *die soeben Angekommenen* 'the people who have just arrived', etc.

This construction is very common in formal written German, especially in non-literary registers (journalism, official writing, technical writing and all kinds of non-fiction), but it is hardly used in speech. The following example shows that there can be a considerable distance between the article and the noun in phrases of this kind:

> Zwar gilt **der** in den vergangenen vier Jahren auf der Basis einer deutsch-amerikanischen Regierungsvereinbarung für bislang 552 Millionen Mark entwickelte **Panzer** als Spitzenmodell seiner Klasse (*Spiegel*)

Although such constructions typically occur with participles, they are used with other adjectives, too: *eine* **für sie ganz typische** Haltung (see **6.1.6**).

(g) Lexicalization of participles used as adjectives

Many participles used as adjectives have become **lexicalized**, i.e. they have developed a meaning distinct from that of the original verb, so that they are now felt to be independent adjectives rather than simply the participles of a particular verb.

A clear indication of this is that lexicalized participles can be used with the usual comparative and superlative endings, e.g. ***spannender***, ***am spannendsten*** 'more, most exciting'. With true participles, *mehr* and *meist* are used, see **6.5.1h**.

Another indication of lexicalization is the possibility of using the prefix *un-* with some of them, e.g. (*un*) *bedeutend* '(in)significant', (*un*) *angebracht* '(in)appropriate', etc. A selection of frequently used lexicalized participles is given below.

- Lexicalized present participles

abstoßend	*repulsive*	empörend	*outrageous*
abwesend	absent	entscheidend	decisive
ansteckend	infectious	glühend	glowing
anstrengend	strenuous	reizend	charming
anwesend	present	rührend	touching
auffallend	*conspicuou* s	spannend	exciting
aufregend	*exciting*	überraschend	surprising
bedeutend	significant	überzeugend	convincing
beruhigend	reassuring	umfassend	extensive
dringend	urgent	verblüffend	amazing
drückend	oppressive	verlockend	tempting
einleuchtend	*reasonable*	wütend	*furious*

These lexicalized present participles can also be used as the complement of the verb *sein*:

ein **spannender** Film	*an exciting film*
der Film war **spannend**	*the film was exciting*

True present participles cannot be used like this in German, and these lexicalized participles are not to be confused with the 'ing' - forms of the English progressive tenses. Compare:

die **brennenden** Lichter	*the burning lights*
die Lichter **brannten**	*the lights were burning*

i.e. *not * die Lichter waren brennend.* German present participles cannot be used with *sein* to form progressive tenses like the English 'ing' - form with the verb 'be' (see also **12.5**).

- Lexicalized past participles

angebracht	*appropriate*	belegt	*occupied*
angesehen	respected	erfahren	experienced
aufgebracht	outraged	gelehrt	scholarly
aufgeregt	excited	geschickt	clever
ausgezeichnet	excellent	verliebt	in love

bekannt	*famous*	verrückt	*insane*

Some lexicalized past participles are archaic and are no longer the current past participle of the verb in question, e.g.:

erhaben *illustrious*	(*erheben* 'raise' – modern past participle *erhoben*)
gediegen *solid, upright*	(*gedeihen* 'prosper' – modern past participle *gediehen*)
verhohlen *secret*	(*verhehlen* 'conceal' – modern past participle *verhehlt*)
verworren *confused*	(*verwirren* 'confuse' – modern past participle *verwirrt*)

A few adjectives which look like past participles are in fact not from verbs at all, e.g. *beleibt* 'portly' and *benachbart* 'neighbouring'. These come directly from the nouns *der Leib* 'body' and *der Nachbar* 'neighbour' – there are no verbs * *beleiben* or **benachbaren*.

11.5.2 Clauses with participles

Both present and past participles can be used to construct non-finite clauses. These can have the force of an adjective, qualifying a noun or pronoun, or of an adverb, giving the circumstances of the action. The participle is usually placed last in the clause, but, exceptionally, it may come earlier.

Participial clauses are restricted to formal written registers. In particular, those with present participles can sound stilted and they are used much less frequently than clauses with 'ing'-forms in English. In practice, English learners are best advised to avoid them entirely in German and use instead one of the alternatives detailed in **11.6**.

(a) Clauses with the present participle

The present participle used in a non-finite clause indicates an action

taking place **at the same time** as that of the finite verb in the main clause:

Den Schildern **folgend**, fanden sie das Krankenhaus (*Walser*)	*Following the signs, they found the hospital*
Ich putzte **auf dem Brett stehend** das Fenster von außen (*Spiegel*)	I was cleaning the window from the outside, standing on the plank
eine ständige Verbesserung des Automobils nach den Möglichkeiten der Zeit, **doch zugleich immer aufbauend auf das Erreichte** (*Mercedes advert*)	*a continuous improvement of the car according to the possibilities of the time, but at the same time always building on what has been achieved*

(b) Clauses with the past participle

The meaning of the **past participle** in a non-finite clause **differs according to the type of verb**.

(i) With **intransitive verbs**, the past participle has an **active** (i.e. not passive) sense, and refers to an action which has taken place before that indicated by the finite verb in the main clause:

Der neue Lehrer, in Freiburg **angekommen**, suchte das Humboldt-Gymnasium auf	*Having arrived in Freiburg, the new teacher went to the Humboldt Secondary School*

(ii) With **transitive verbs**, the past participle has the force of a **passive**. If the verb denotes a **continuous action**, the participle refers to an **action simultaneous** with that of the finite verb in the main clause:

Der Zug, von zwei Lokomotiven **gezogen**, fuhr in den Bahnhof ein	*The train, which was being pulled by two locomotives, came into the station*
Da saß eine zarte Dame mit einem zarten Gesicht, **umrahmt von einem blonden Pagenkopf**	*There sat a delicate lady with a delicate face, which was framed by blond hair cut in the page-*

(iii) With **transitive verbs** which denote a **momentary action**, the past participle refers to an action which has taken place **before** that of the finite verb in the main clause:

Der Flüchtling, von seinen Freunden **gewarnt**, verließ sein Versteck	*The fugitive, (who had been) warned by his friends, left his hiding-place*
Zwar hatte dieses Mal der Dolch, **durch ein seidenes Unterkleid abgelenkt**, das Opfer nicht sogleich tödlich getroffen (*Heyse*)	*Nevertheless, this time the dagger, deflected by a silk petticoat, had not immediately wounded the victim fatally*

(c) Comparative clauses can be formed with *wie* and a past participle:

eine Betonburg, **wie** von einem anderen Stern in diesen Wald **gefallen** (*Walser*)	*a concrete castle, as if it had fallen into this forest from another star*

In general, this construction is also typical of formal registers, but some have become established idioms and are more widely used:

Also, **wie ausgemacht**: Wir treffen uns um acht	*Well, then, as arranged, we'll meet at eight o'clock*
wie gesagt, **wie erwartet**	as I said, as expected
wie gehabt, **wie gewöhnlich**	*as before, as usual*

(d) A clause with a past participle can be introduced by *obwohl*

This is similar to the English construction with '(al)though':

Obwohl von seinen Kollegen	*Although respected by his*

geachtet, war er nicht sehr beliebt	*colleagues, he was not very popular*

No other conjunction can introduce a participial clause in German.

11.5.3 Other uses of the past participle

(a) Elliptical use of the past participle

The past participle is sometimes used in isolation as an exclamation or an impersonal command. Many such forms have become idiomatic:

Verdammt! Verflucht (noch mal)!	*Blast!*
Frisch gewagt!	Let's get on with it!
Aufgepasst!	*Watch out!*

For further details, see **14.1.3b**.

(b) The past participle after *finden*

This corresponds closely to the English construction:

Ich **fand** sie vor dem Ofen **zusammengesunken**	*I found her slumped in front of the stove*
Du wirst ihn dort **aufgebahrt finden**	*You will find him laid out there*

For the use of *finden* with a present participle, see **11.6.5c**.

(c) The past participle after *kommen*

This corresponds to an English 'ing'-form with 'come':

Er **kam** ins Zimmer **gelaufen**	*He came running into the room*
Sie **kam herbeigeeilt**	*She came hurrying along*

(d) The past participle after *bleiben* and *scheinen*

bleiben and *scheinen* can be used with a following past participle in a construction which is similar to English:

Ihr Brief blieb unbeantwortet	*Her letter remained unanswered*
Die Tür schien geschlossen	*The door seemed/appeared closed*

The participle with these verbs has a similar force to that of the *sein* -passive, see **13.2.2c**.

11.6 English constructions with the '-ing' form

The English 'ing'-form is used much more widely than the German present participle, which is used mainly as an adjective (see **11.5.1**). In other contexts, different constructions are usually preferred in German. In particular, the German present participle is not often used in participial clauses (see **11.5.2**), and it is generally advisable for English learners to avoid attempting to use clauses with the present participle in German. The equivalents given below for constructions with the English 'ing'-form represent more idiomatic German usage.

11.6.1 The English 'ing'-form used as a noun

The usual German equivalent is one of the following. As some of the examples show, it is often the case that more than one of these alternatives is possible.

(a) An infinitive used as a noun, or another noun derived from a verb

(see also **11.4** and **20.2**):

Aufmerksames **Zuhören** ist wichtig	*Attentive listening is important*
die Freuden des **Skilaufens**	the pleasures of skiing
Warum hat man die **Eröffnung** der neuen Schule aufgeschoben?	Why has the opening of the new school been delayed?
Er ist einer solchen **Tat** nicht fähig	*He is not capable of doing such a thing*

(b) An infinitive clause with *zu*

Es ist wichtig aufmerksam **zuzuhören**	*Attentive listening is important*
Er gab zu das Fenster **zerbrochen zu haben**	He admitted having broken the window
Ich verlasse mich darauf, ihn zu Hause **zu finden**	*I rely on finding him at home*

(c) A *dass*-clause

Es ist wichtig, **dass** man aufmerksam **zuhört**	*Attentive listening is important*
Er gab zu, **dass** er das Fenster **zerbrochen hatte**	He admitted having broken the window
Ich verlasse mich darauf, **dass** ich ihn zu Hause **finde**	*I rely on finding him at home*

This alternative must be used if the English 'ing'-form has a different subject to that of the main verb:

Ich kann es mir nicht vorstellen, **dass sie ihren Ring verkauft**	*I can't imagine her selling her ring*
Ich verlasse mich darauf, **dass er alles arrangiert**	*I rely on his/him arranging everything*

(d) A finite verb

Wer **kocht** bei Ihnen zu Hause?	*Who does the cooking at your house?*

The subjectless passive (see **13.1.4**) can be used for an English 'ing'-form after 'there is/are':

Überall **wurde** laut **gesungen**	*There was loud singing everywhere*

For 'there is/are' followed by 'no' and an 'ing'-form, a construction with *sich lassen* (see **13.4.6**) may be possible:

Das **lässt sich** nicht leugnen	*There's no denying that*

11.6.2 The English 'ing'-form after prepositions

(a) 'by' (or 'through') + 'ing'-form

This construction usually corresponds to a clause with ***dadurch, dass*** or ***indem*** (see **17.3.1f**), or to ***durch*** followed by an infinitival noun. Thus the following are possible equivalents for the English sentence 'He escaped by jumping out of the window':

Er rettete sich **dadurch, dass er aus dem Fenster sprang**

Er rettete sich, **indem er aus dem Fenster sprang**

Er rettete sich **durch einen Sprung aus dem Fenster**

(b) 'for' + 'ing'-form

The commonest equivalents are (***um***) ... ***zu*** (see **11.2.6a**), or ***zum*** with an infinitival noun (see **11.4.2d**):

Sie hat keine Zeit mehr, **(um) zu üben** Sie hat keine Zeit mehr **zum Üben**	}	*She no longer has any time for practising*
Es ist zu kalt **zum Schwimmen**		*It's too cold for swimming*

(c) 'instead of' + 'ing'-form

The equivalent is (***an***) ***statt*** … ***zu*** or (***an***) ***statt dass*** is used (see **11.2.6c**):

Er spielt, **anstatt zu arbeiten/ anstatt dass er arbeitet**	*He is playing instead of working*

(d) 'on' + 'ing'-form

This usually corresponds to a clause with *als* or *wenn*, or *beim* followed by an infinitival noun (see **11.4.2b**):

Als sie den Brief las, wurde sie rot **Beim Lesen des Briefes** wurde sie rot	}	*On reading the letter, she blushed*

(e) 'with' + 'ing'-form

This construction has a variety of possible equivalents in German, chiefly subordinate clauses introduced by a conjunction with an appropriate meaning. The range of equivalents is similar to that for participial clauses with 'ing'-forms (see **11.6.3**):

Wenn der Berg nur als ein unbestimmtes Gebilde erscheint, **wobei** sich die Baumgruppen bloß	*If the hill only appears as an indefinite shape with the groups of trees showing only as faint*

als blasse Schatten zeigen, …	*shadows, …*
Es ist schön hier, **wenn** die Sonne durch die Bäume scheint	*It's lovely here with the sun shining through the trees*
Wir sahen die alte Stadt, **über die** die zerfallene Burg emporragte	*We could see the old town with the ruined castle towering above it*
Da der Fluss rasch stieg, mussten Notmaßnahmen getroffen werden	*With the river rising rapidly, emergency measures had to be taken*
Der Bürgermeister eröffnete die Sitzung **unter** Ausschluss der Öffentlichkeit	*The mayor opened the meeting, with the public being excluded*
Sie eilte durch die Stadt, **und dabei** wehten ihre Haare nach hinten	*She raced through the town with her hair streaming behind her*

(f) 'without' + ing'-form

This corresponds to ***ohne** … **zu*** or ***ohne dass*** (see **11.2.6b**):

Der Zug fuhr durch, **ohne zu halten**	*The train went through without stopping*
Er bot uns seine Hilfe an, **ohne dass wir ihn darum bitten mussten**	*He offered us his help without our / us having to ask him for it*

(g) Other prepositions followed by 'ing'-forms

The German equivalent is typically a subordinate clause or an appropriate preposition with an infinitival noun, or another noun derived from a verb:

Nach seiner Ankunft/ **Nachdem** er angekommen war, ging er sofort zum Rathaus	*After arriving he went straight to the town hall*
Vor dem Einschlafen/ **Bevor** er einschlief, hat er schnell die Zeitung gelesen	*Before going to sleep he quickly read the newspaper*
	In spite of his / him having helped me, I arrived late

Trotz seiner Hilfe/ **Obwohl** er mir geholfen hatte, kam ich zu spät an

11.6.3 Participial clauses with 'ing'-forms

The German equivalent depends on the sense of the clause.

(a) The participial clause and the main verb refer to consecutive or simultaneous actions

(i) The simplest German equivalent is to use **main clauses** joined by ***und***. ***dabei*** can be used in the second clause to stress that the actions are taking place (or took place) at the same time:

Sie öffnete die Schublade **und** nahm das Testament heraus	*Opening the drawer, she took out the will*
Ich saß an seinem Tisch **und** schrieb einen Brief	I was sitting at his table writing a letter
Er erzählte seine Geschichte **und** machte (**dabei**) nach jedem Satz eine Pause	*He told his story, pausing after each sentence*

In modern German, a clause with *indem* does *not* correspond to English participial clauses like those above, despite what some English handbooks of German have traditionally claimed. For the use of *indem*, see **17.3.1f**.

(ii) A clause introduced by ***wobei*** can be used if the actions in the two clauses are simultaneous (see also **17.3.8**):

> Er erzählte seine Geschichte, **wobei** er nach jedem Satz eine Pause machte.

(iii) If the action of the English participial clause precedes that of the main clause, the German equivalent can be a clause with ***als***,

wenn or ***nachdem***:

Als wir zum Fenster hinausschauten, sahen wir einen Polizeiwagen heranfahren	*Looking out of the window, we saw a police car approaching*
Wenn man oben auf dem Kirchturm steht, sieht man das ganze Dorf	Standing on top of the church tower, you can see the whole village
Nachdem ich die Briefe beantwortet hatte, ging ich spazieren	*Having answered the letters, I went for a walk*

(b) Participial clauses which give a reason or cause

In German, a subordinate clause with ***da*** or ***weil*** can be used:

Da es schon spät war, gingen wir nach Hause	*It being late, we went home*
Weil ich wusste, dass sie verreist war, habe ich sie nicht angerufen	*Knowing that she was away, I didn't call her*

(c) Participial clauses introduced by a conjunction

Subordinate clauses with the appropriate conjunction are used in German:

Während ich auf dich wartete, habe ich einen schweren Unfall gesehen	*While waiting for you, I saw a bad accident*

11.6.4 Clauses with 'ing'-forms used to qualify nouns

These correspond in German to a **relative clause** or, especially in formal written German, to an extended participial phrase (see **11.5.1f**):

Er sah ein **in entgegengesetzter Richtung kommendes** Auto Er sah ein Auto, **das in entgegengesetzter Richtung kam**	}	*He saw a car coming in the opposite direction*
Einige Minuten später eilte der Arzt, **der einen kleinen Koffer trug**, zum Krankenhaus hin		*A few minutes later the doctor, carrying a small suitcase, was hurrying towards the hospital*

11.6.5 English 'ing'-forms after some verbs

The usual German equivalent of English 'ing'-forms after verbs is an infinitive with *zu* or a clause, see **11.6.1**. However, a few verbs are special cases.

(a) verbs of perception

i.e. 'see', 'hear', 'feel'. The English 'ing'-form corresponds to a **bare infinitive** or a **clause with *wie*** (see **11.3.1b**):

Ich höre die Vögel laut **singen** Ich höre, **wie die Vögel** laut **singen**	}	*I can hear the birds singing loudly*

(b) verbs of motion

e.g. 'go', 'come', 'send', etc. If the 'ing'-form expresses purpose, a **bare infinitive** is used in German (see **11.3.1e**):

Wir gehen heute **schwimmen**	*We're going swimming today*
Kommst du heute mit **schwimmen** ?	Are you coming swimming with us today?
Sie schickte ihn **einkaufen**	*She sent him shopping*

The past participle is used after *kommen*, e.g. *Sie kam herangelaufen* 'She came running up', see **11.5.3c**.

(c) *ing*-form expressing position

i.e. *standing*, *sitting*, etc. after *find*, *have*, *remain*, *stay*

(i) German uses a **bare infinitive** after ***bleiben***, ***finden***, ***haben*** and ***lassen*** (see **11.3.1**):

Sie **blieb** neben dem Ofen **sitzen**	*She remained sitting by the stove*
Ich **fand** ihn am Fenster **stehen**	I found him standing by the window
Haben Sie einen Mantel in der Garderobe **hängen** ?	Have you got a coat hanging in the wardrobe?
Sie **ließ** ihre Sachen **herumliegen**	*She left her things lying about*

(ii) ***finden*** can also be used with the present participle of many verbs, e.g.:

Sie fand ihn **schlafend**. Er fand sie Pilze **suchend** im Wald.

This construction is also possible with verbs of place, as an alternative to the infinitive (see **11.3.1f**):

Sie fand das Buch auf dem Boden **liegend/liegen**.

(d) 'keep' + 'ing'-form

A frequent equivalent is ***lassen*** with a **bare infinitive**, see **11.3.1c**:

Sie **ließ** uns **warten** *She kept us waiting*

(e) 'keep'/'go on' + 'ing'-form

The simplest idiomatic equivalent is the adverb ***weiter*** with the verb (see **7.4.4**):

Sie sang **weiter** *She kept/went on singing*

(f) 'need', 'want' + 'ing'-form

These most often correspond to ***müssen***, see **15.5.1b**:

Das **muss** noch erklärt werden *That still needs/wants explaining*
Man **muss** sich um sie kümmern *She needs/wants looking after*

(g) 'can't help' + 'ing'-form

einfach müssen is the commonest German equivalent, see **15.3.6**:

Sie musste einfach lachen *She couldn't help laughing*

The tenses

The grammatical category of TENSE involves the indication of time through special forms of the verb (see **10.1.1b**). This chapter deals with the uses of the tenses of the INDICATIVE MOOD (i.e. not the subjunctive) in German:

- The **present tense** (section **12.1**)
- The **past** and the **perfect tenses** (section **12.2**)
- The **future tenses** (section **12.3**)
- The **pluperfect tense** (section **12.4**)
- The **English progressive tenses** (section **12.5**)

German has six tenses, as illustrated for the verb ***kaufen*** 'buy' in Table 12.1. These are:

- two SIMPLE tenses: PRESENT and PAST
- four COMPOUND tenses: PERFECT, PLUPERFECT, FUTURE and FUTURE PERFECT

Table 12.1 German and English tenses

Present	ich kaufe	*I buy*
Past	ich kaufte	I bought
Perfect	ich habe gekauft	I have bought
Pluperfect	ich hatte gekauft	I had bought
Future	ich werde kaufen	I shall/will buy
Future Perfect	ich werde gekauft haben	*I shall/will have bought*

The CONJUGATION (i.e. the forms) of the tenses in German is explained

in Chapter 10 and shown there in full in the following tables:

- Table 10.10: the **simple tenses** of **regular verbs**
- Table 10.11: the **simple tenses** of the irregular verbs ***haben***, ***sein*** and **werden**
- Table 10.12: the **simple tenses** of the **modal auxiliary** verbs and **wissen**
- Table 10.13: the **compound tenses**

The forms and uses of the tenses in German and English are quite similar (except that German has no PROGRESSIVE tenses, see section **12.5**), and this chapter concentrates on the uses of German tenses which differ from those of the corresponding English tenses.

Table 12.1 illustrates the tenses of the ACTIVE voice of *kaufen*. The same tenses are also found in the PASSIVE voice, with the same meanings, as shown in Chapter 13.

This chapter only deals with the tenses of the INDICATIVE mood. The SUBJUNCTIVE mood also has tense forms, but these are used in a rather different way, as explained in Chapter 14.

12.1 The present tense

12.1.1 The main use of the present tense

The present tense is most often used to relate **present**, **habitual** or '**timeless**' actions or events. This corresponds to the main use of the present tense (simple or progressive) in English:

Sie **singt** gut	*She sings/is singing well*
Ich **lese** die Zeitung von gestern	I'm reading yesterday's newspaper
Dankend **bestätigen** wir den Empfang Ihres Schreibens vom 30. Juni	We gratefully acknowledge receipt of your letter of 30th June
Ursula speaks a little Spanish	

Ursula **spricht** ein wenig Spanisch	*It rains a lot in Ireland*
In Irland **regnet** es viel	

12.1.2 The present tense in 'up-to-now' contexts

The German present tense can indicate an action or state which **began in the past and is still going on at the moment of speaking**. Sentences like this typically contain an adverb (***schon*** or ***bisher***), an adverbial phrase with ***seit***, or an adverbial clause with ***seit*** (***dem***) or ***solange***. These all express the idea of '**up to now**'.

(a) German most often uses the present tense in 'up-to-now' contexts

This is strikingly different to English, which uses the **perfect** tense (typically the **perfect progressive**) in such contexts:

Ich **stehe** schon lange hier vor dem Bahnhof	*I've been standing here in front of the station for a long time*
Seit wann **kennst** du Frau Wiegand?	How long have you known Mrs Wiegand?
Ich **suche** sie seit vier Jahren zu verstehen (*C. Weyden*)	I have been trying to understand her for four years
Seitdem die Spanier die deutschen Finanzämter darüber **informieren**, wurden viele Villen rasch verkauft (*HMP*)	Since the Spanish have informed the German tax authorities about this, a lot of villas have been swiftly sold off
Er **wohnt** in Hamburg, solange ich ihn kenne	*He's been living in Hamburg as long as I've known him*

(b) In a few 'up-to-now' contexts German uses the perfect tense

These are exceptions to the general rule given in **(a)** above. There are

two main types of such contexts:

(i) in **negative statements**:

Ich **habe** ihn seit Jahren nicht **gesehen**	*I haven't seen him for years*
Seitdem ich ihn kenne, **haben** wir uns nie **gestritten**	*Since I've known him, we have never quarrelled*

However, the present tense is used in negative statements if there has been a **continuous action** or **state** lasting up to the present time:

Seit Weihnachten **arbeitet** er nicht mehr	*He hasn't worked since Christmas*
Seitdem ich hier im Dorf wohne, **bin** ich nie einsam	*Since I've been living here in the village, I've never been lonely*

(ii) when referring to a **series of repeated actions** or **states**:

Er **ist** seit Weihnachten mehrmals krank **gewesen**	*He's been ill several times since Christmas*
Seit ihrer Erkrankung/Seitdem sie krank ist, **hat** sie viele Bücher **gelesen**	*Since she's been ill, she has read a lot of books*

However, the present tense is used to refer to a **habit** or **state** which has **continued up to the present** moment. English uses a progressive tense in contexts like this, as can be seen by comparing this example with the one above:

Seit ihrer Erkrankung/Seitdem sie krank ist, **liest** sie viele Bücher	*Since she's been ill, she's been reading a lot of books*

(c) The present tense of *kommen* is often used to refer to the immediate past

Here too, the idea is of an action continuing up to the present moment.

English normally uses the perfect tense:

Ich **komme**, die Miete zu bezahlen	*I've come to pay the rent*

12.1.3 The present tense referring to the future

German often uses the present tense to refer to the future. This is often possible in English, too:

Der Match **beginnt** um 17 Uhr	*The match starts at 5 o'clock*
Heute Nachmittag **fahren** wir nach Zürich	*We're going to Zurich this afternoon*

However, this use of the present is much more restricted in English than German, which can often use the present in contexts where a future tense is needed in English. This applies whether English uses the future form with 'will / shall /'ll' or 'be going to':

In zwei Stunden **bin** ich wieder da	*I'll be back in two hours*
Wir **finden** es nie	*We're never going to find it*

In practice, the present tense is much more frequent than the future in German to refer to future time as long as it is clear from the context that the future is meant. This is especially the case if there is an adverbial in the sentence pointing to the future:

Ich **schreibe** den Brief heute Abend	*I'll write the letter tonight*
Morgen um diese Zeit **bin** ich in Wien	*This time tomorrow I'll be in Vienna*

The present tense can always be used in German to refer to future time even when no adverbial is present, as long as the context points unambiguously to the future:

Astrid **holt** uns von der Bahn ab	*Astrid is going to meet us from the station*
Ich erwarte, dass sie **kommt**	I expect she'll come
Weitere Einzelheiten **erteilt** Ihnen	

unser Fachpersonal	Our specialist staff will give you
Vielleicht **sage** ich es ihm	further information
	Perhaps I'll tell him

In practice, the only contexts where a future tense needs to be used in German are those where the present tense could be interpreted as referring to the present, i.e. if the rest of the context does not make the reference to the future clear.

Compare the following pairs of sentences, where we must use the future tense in German if we want to make it clear that the future is meant, because the present tense could only be understood to refer to the present:

Er **wird** wieder in der Bank **arbeiten**	*He's going to work at the bank again*
Er **arbeitet** wieder in der Bank	He's working at the bank again
Ich **werde** auf euch **warten**	I'll be waiting for you
Ich **warte** auf euch	I'm waiting for you
Sie weiß, was **geschehen wird**	She knows what will happen
Sie weiß, was **geschieht**	*She knows what is happening*

If the **future tense** is used where it would be possible to use the present tense, it often emphasizes the idea of a **prediction**, an **intention** or a **supposition** (as is typically the case with the German future tense, see **12.3**). In English we often use *be going to* (rather than *will/shall*) in such contexts, as this tends to emphasize intention more strongly:

Es **wird** morgen wieder **regnen**	*It is going to rain again tomorrow*
Ich **werde** den Brief heute Abend **schreiben**	I am going to write the letter tonight
Wir aber fliegen dorthin, wo die Sonne scheint, und keine Wolken **werden** uns jetzt noch **stoppen** (*Grzimek*)	*But we're flying to where the sun shines, and no clouds are going to stop us now*

12.1.4 The present tense referring to the past

This so-called '**historic present**' is used quite frequently in writing in German, probably more so than in English. It makes the past seem more immediate and it is a common stylistic device in narrative fiction and historical writing:

> Mit zuckenden Nerven **marschieren** sie näher, noch immer **versuchen** sie sich gegenseitig zu täuschen, so sehr sie alle schon die Wahrheit **wissen**: dass die Norweger, dass Amundsen ihnen zuvorgekommen **ist**. Bald **zerbricht** der letzte Zweifel … (*Zweig*)

Similarly in newspaper headlines:

40-Tonner **zermalmt** Trabi – 2 starben (*BILD*)	*Forty-ton lorry squashes Trabi – two dead*

It is also a typical feature of narration in colloquial speech, as in English:

Gestern Abend **geh** ich ins Café und **seh** den Horst Brunner dort an der Theke sitzen	*Last night I go down the pub and see Horst Brunner sitting there at the bar*

12.2 The past and perfect tenses

What in this book is referred to as the PAST TENSE is sometimes called the IMPERFECT TENSE. However, unlike the imperfect tense of some languages, like French, Spanish or Latin, the **German past tense does not convey the idea of an incomplete or continuous action**. It simply indicates that the action or event took place at some time in the past in exactly the same way as the English past tense. For this reason, the less misleading term 'past tense' is to be preferred.

12.2.1 The English and German past and perfect tenses

In **English** there is typically a **clear difference between the past and**

the perfect tenses, and the sentences 'I broke my leg' and 'I have broken my leg' are quite distinct in meaning.

The **English past tense** simply tells us that **something happened in the past**, so that 'I broke my leg' tells us that it happened at some time in the past – and it's probably mended now.

The **English perfect tense**, on the other hand, usually indicates that what happened in the past still has **some relevance at the present**. When we say 'I have broken my leg', for instance, it usually means that it is still broken at the moment of speaking.

The **German** sentences *Ich **brach** mir das Bein* and *Ich **habe** mir das Bein **gebrochen*** look deceptively similar to English. However, the difference in meaning is much less clear-cut than in English, and in many contexts either can be used without any real difference in meaning. Which one is used is often rather a **matter of style** or **register**.

The main differences between the two German tenses can be summarized as follows:

- The PERFECT tense is used principally:
    - to refer to a past action or event which has relevance to the present
    - in spoken German, to refer to past actions and events
- The PAST tense is used principally:
    - in written German, to refer to past actions and events

More details are given in the remainder of this section.

12.2.2 Narrating past actions or events

Narrations of past actions and events are typically predominantly in the

PAST tense in **written German** and in the PERFECT tense in **spoken German**.

In English, the past tense is usual in speech or writing to relate an action or event lying entirely in the past. In German, though, while the past tense is usual in such contexts in the written language, the perfect tends to predominate in everyday speech, especially in South Germany.

The characteristic use of the past tense in a written narrative can be seen in this passage from Bernhard Schlink's novel *Der Vorleser*:

> Den Sommer nach dem Prozess **verbrachte** ich im Lesesaal der Universitätsbibliothek. Ich **kam**, wenn der Lesesaal **öffnete**, und **ging**, wenn er **schloss**. An den Wochenenden **lernte** ich zu Hause. Ich **lernte** so ausschließlich, so besessen, dass die Gefühle und Gedanken, die der Prozess betäubt hatte, betäubt **blieben**. Ich **vermied** Kontakte. Ich **zog** zu Hause aus und **mietete** ein Zimmer. Die wenigen Bekannten, die mich im Lesesaal oder bei gelegentlichen Kinobesuchen **ansprachen**, **stieß** ich zurück.

In Franz Xaver Kroetz's *Chiemgauer Gschichten*, by contrast, where ordinary people (from South Germany) are telling their stories to the author, the narrative is in the perfect tense:

> Ja, und dann **hats** wieder ein bisschen **gedauert**, bis sie wieder eine Arbeit **gekriegt hat**, also Lohn von ihr **ist** praktisch nichts **eingegangen**. **Hab** ich alles selbst verdienen **müssen**. Da wo wir dann **geheiratet haben**, da **hab** ich zwei Monate so noch **gearbeitet** auf Montage, und dann **bin** ich gekündigt **worden**.

Nevertheless, there are **important exceptions** to this **general tendency** for the past tense to be used in written narrative and the perfect tense in spoken narrative.

(a) The past tense in spoken German

In South Germany, Austria and Switzerland the past tense is practically never used in everyday speech. However, this is much less true in North

Germany (i.e. north of the river Main), where the past tense is quite frequent in everyday speech, especially in the following contexts:

(i) with **commonly used verbs**, i.e.:

- *sein*, *haben*, *bleiben*, *gehen*, *kommen*, *stehen* and *es gibt*
- the modal auxiliaries
- verbs of saying, thinking and feeling

In this way, the following would be equally frequent in North German speech:

Ich **war** vorige Woche in Bremen	Ich **bin** vorige Woche in Bremen **gewesen**
Sie **konnte** gestern nicht kommen	Sie **hat** gestern nicht kommen **können**
Was **sagten** Sie?	Was **haben** Sie **gesagt** ?

The past tense of other verbs can be heard in spoken North German, but, as a general rule, rather less often than the perfect tense.

(ii) with the **passive**, e.g. *Das alte Haus **wurde** abgerissen* or *Das alte Haus **ist** abgerissen **worden***
(iii) in clauses introduced by ***als*** or ***wie***, and in any sentence with the adverb ***damals***:

Ich habe sie gesehen, als sie aus der Straßenbahn **ausstieg**	*I saw her when she got out of the tram*
Ich habe gehört, wie sie die Treppe **herunterkam**	I heard her coming down the stairs
Damals **mussten** alle Russisch lernen	*At that time everybody had to learn Russian*

(iv) to record a **state**, or a **habitual** or **repeated action** in the past:

Die Rechnung **lag** auf dem Tisch	*The bill was lying on the table*
Bei uns in der alten Heimat **dauerten** die Sommerferien	In our old homeland the summer holidays used to last

länger als hier	longer than they do here
Ich habe gewusst, dass sein Vater **trank**	*I knew his father used to drink*

(b) A longer narrative oftens starts with a perfect tense, and then continues in the past

The perfect is used to set the scene, as it were. This usage is especially frequent in newspaper reports:

> 10 Tage nach der Jumbo-Katastrophe in Japan **ist** schon wieder eine Boeing **explodiert**. 54 Urlauber **starben** gestern in einem flammenden Inferno auf dem Flughafen Manchester (England). Als ihr Jet nach Korfu (Griechenland) starten **wollte**, **wurde** das linke Triebwerk krachend zer-fetzt. Sofort **brannte** die Maschine wie eine Riesenfackel. Im Rumpf eingeschlossene Urlauber **trampelten** andere tot. (*BILD*)

(c) The perfect is sometimes used as a narrative tense in written German

The perfect tense is sometimes deliberately used to give a more colloquial tone. However, particularly outside fiction, it is often treated simply as an alternative to the past and seems to be used for reasons which relate to style, emphasis and sentence rhythm, as in the following text from Grzimek's *Serengeti darf nicht sterben*:

> Ein tüchtiger Mann namens Rothe, der Verwalter bei den Siedentopfs **war**, **hat** 1913 die Reste einer uralten Siedlung und eines Friedhofs aus der Jungsteinzeit am Nordende des Kraters **entdeckt**. Schon diese Leute, die einige Jahrhunderte vor Christus **gelebt haben**, **weideten** als Hirten ihr Vieh wie heute die Massai. Rothe **hieß** eigentlich anders, er **war** 1905 bei der ersten finnischen Revolution kurze Zeit Minister **gewesen**, … In Ägypten **stellte** ihm die russische Geheimpolizei nach, und so **kam** er als Tierpfleger mit Maultieren nach Deutsch-Ostafrika.

In practice, the past tense could be substituted for any of the perfect tenses in this passage, or vice versa, without any real difference in meaning.

12.2.3 Past actions or events with continuing relevance in the present

(a) The perfect tense typically indicates a past action with present relevance

The **perfect tense** is usual in both spoken and written German to indicate a **past action or event whose effect is relevant or apparent at the moment of speaking**. Linking the past with the present is also the typical function of the English perfect tense, and in practice the perfect tense is normally used in German in such contexts, i.e.:

(i) where the result of a past action or event is still evident at the moment of speaking:

Sie **hat** sich das Bein **gebrochen** (her leg is still in plaster)	*She's broken her leg*
Es **hat** in der Nacht **geschneit** (there's snow on the ground)	It snowed in the night
Meine Tante **ist** gestern **angekommen** (and she's still here)	*My aunt arrived last night*

As the last two examples above show, the perfect tense is used in German to express the present relevance of a past action even if there is a past time adverbial in the sentence. This differs from English, where the past tense is **always** used in sentences which contain adverbials expressing past time.

The use of the perfect tense to express 'present relevance' means that it is particularly frequent with the adverb *schon* 'already',

'yet'. This corresponds to British English usage, but American usage often prefers the past tense in such contexts:

Ich **habe** sie **schon gesehen**	{	(BrE): *I've already seen her* (AmE): *I saw her already*
Hast du den Arzt **schon angerufen** ?	{	(BrE): *Have you called the doctor yet?* (AmE): *Did you call the doctor yet?*

(ii) to refer to something which happened in the **immediate past**:

Jetzt **hat** Ballack den Ball **eingeworfen**	*Ballack has just thrown the ball in*
Damit **haben** wir diese kleine Führung **beendet**	*With this we have come to the end of this short guided tour*

(iii) to refer to **states** or **repeated actions** which have continued **up to the moment of speaking**:

Ich **habe** immer **gefunden**, dass es nützlich ist, viel zu wissen	*I've always found it useful to know a lot*
Ich **habe** ihm wiederholt **gesagt**, dass er ihr schreiben sollte	I've told him repeatedly that he ought to write to her
Das Paket **ist** noch nicht **angekommen**	*The parcel hasn't arrived yet*

The **present** tense is used in German to refer to activities or states which began in the past and continue into the present, where English typically uses a perfect progressive, see **12.1.2**.

(b) The past tense used to indicate a past action or event with present relevance

The past tense is occasionally used to indicate a past action or event which has relevance for the present, i.e. in the kind of contexts given under **(a)** above which are typically the preserve of the perfect. This use of the past tense is mainly restricted to the following contexts, almost exclusively in written German:

(i) in **newspaper headlines** and **short announcements**. In these contexts the past tense, with its single word, can sound neater and snappier:

Lastwagenfahrer **gaben** Blockade am Brenner nach einer Woche auf (*FR*)	*Lorry drivers have given up their blockade on the Brenner pass after a week*
Sie **sahen** soeben einen Bericht von unserem Korrespondenten in Moskau	*You have just been watching a report from our Moscow correspondent*

(ii) with **common verbs**, especially the auxiliary verbs, and in the **passive**:

In der letzten Zeit **war** sie sehr krank	*She has been very ill recently*
Er **musste** heute kommen	He has had to come today
Noch nie **wurde** ein Auto so oft gebaut (*VW advert*)	*No car has ever been produced in such numbers*

(iii) in **relative clauses**:

Das sind die ersten Bilder der Unruhen in Birma, die uns **erreichten**	*These are the first pictures which have reached us of the disturbances in Burma*

In all the above examples the perfect tense would be equally possible.

12.2.4 Other uses of the past tense

The perfect tense cannot be used in any of these contexts.

(a) to relate a continuing state or activity in the past

i.e. a continuing state or activity which began in the past and was still in progress at a more recent point in the past. This is the equivalent in past time of the use of the present with *seit* phrases, etc. (see **12.1.2**). In English the pluperfect tense (especially the pluperfect progressive) is used in such contexts:

Ich **wartete** schon zwei Stunden/ seit zwei Stunden auf sie	*I had been waiting for her for two hours*
Das Schloss **gehörte** seit Jahrhunderten den Grafen von Solms	*The castle had belonged to the Counts of Solms for centuries*

As with the use of the perfect tense rather than the present, the pluperfect tense is used rather than the past tense in **negative statements** or when referring to a **series** of actions or states:

Ich **hatte** ihm seit Jahren **zugeredet**, sein Haus zu verkaufen	*I had been urging him for years to sell his house*

(b) with the sense of a future-in-the-past

The past tense is an infrequent alternative in such contexts to the *würd e* -form of *Konjunktiv II* (see **14.2.4c**):

Nachdem er sicher war, dass der Vorgang nicht mehr **hochging** (*more usual*: *hochgehen würde*), verließ er das Theater	*When he was sure that the curtain would not go up again, he left the theatre*

(c) to refer to the present moment

This is a special usage to recall information which has already been given in the past:

Wie **war** ihr Name doch gleich?	*What was your name again?*
Wer **erhielt** das Eisbein?	Who is getting the knuckle of pork?
Herr Ober, ich **bekam** noch ein Bier	*Waiter, I did order another beer*

12.2.5 Other uses of the perfect tense

The past tense cannot be used in any of these contexts.

(a) The perfect tense used instead of the future perfect

(i) The perfect tense is often used in the sense of a future perfect:

Bis morgen um diese Zeit **habe** ich alles **geregelt**	*By this time tomorrow I shall have settled everything*
Bald **habe** ich den Brief **geschrieben**	*I'll have written the letter soon*

As with the use of the present tense to refer to future time (see **12.1.3**), the perfect tense can only substitute for the future perfect if it is clear from the context (e.g. from a time adverbial) that the reference is to the future. There is no comparable usage in English, where the future perfect tense is always used in such contexts.

When the future perfect tense is used in such sentences in German, e.g. *Bis morgen um diese Zeit* ***werde*** *ich alles* **geregelt haben**, there is often an additional sense of a prediction or a supposition, see **12.3.2**.

(ii) The perfect is usual in subordinate time clauses with future reference, typically introduced by the conjunction ***wenn***. In these contexts English and German correspond in the tense used:

Wenn ich von ihm **gehört habe**, werde ich dir schreiben	*When I've heard from him, I shall write to you*

Very occasionally a future perfect is used in such sentences in written German:

Ich will fortgehen, wenn ich genug **gelesen haben werde** (*Andersch*)	*I intend to leave when I have read enough*

(b) The perfect tense used to indicate a characteristic state

The perfect tense can be used in German to indicate an action whose completion can be taken to define a particular person or thing. This usage is particularly common in technical and legal language and has no equivalent in English.

Ein Unglück **ist** schnell **geschehen**	*Accidents happen quickly* (i.e. if you don't watch out)
Ein Akademiker **hat studiert**	*A graduate is a person who has completed a course of study*
Die Mannschaft, die zuerst 50 Punkte **erreicht hat**, ist Sieger	*The first team to reach 50 points is the winner*

12.3 The future and future perfect tenses

The conjugation of the **future** and **future perfect** tenses is explained in **10.3.1** and shown in **Table 10.13**.

The English future has two forms, one with the auxiliaries *will* or *shall* (usually reduced to *'ll* in speech, e.g. *I'll probably see her on Monday*), and one with the phrase *be going to* (e.g. *I'm going to see her on Monday*). The difference in meaning between these is slight, although *be going to* is rather less frequent, more typical of informal registers, and tends to emphasize immediacy or intention more strongly.

12.3.1 The future and future perfect tenses refer to future time

The **future tense** (sometimes called *Futur I* in German) relates an action or event which will happen after the time of speaking:

Ich **werde** sie nicht mehr **sehen**	*I won't/shan't see her again*
Wirst du ihr helfen **können** ?	*Will you/Are you going to be able to help her?*

The **future perfect** tense (sometimes called *Futur II* in German) is a 'relative' tense, indicating an action or event which will take place **before** another action or event in the future:

Gewiss **wird** sie den Brief bis morgen Abend **geschrieben haben**	*She will certainly have written the letter by tomorrow evening*

If the reference to future time is otherwise clear from the context, German often prefers the present tense to the future (see **12.1.3**), and the perfect tense to the future perfect (see **12.2.5a**). However, there are contexts where these tenses must be used to make the future reference clear:

Ich mag sie nicht und **werde** sie nie **mögen**	*I don't like her and I'll never like her*
Hat er Ihnen nicht gesagt, dass er Sie **besuchen wird** ?	Didn't he tell you that he's going to visit you?
Am Montag **wird** sie den Gipfel **erreicht haben**	*On Monday she'll have reached the summit*

12.3.2 The future and future perfect tenses expressing a possibility

The future and future perfect tenses are often used to express an intention, a supposition or a possibility, rather than simply a time relationship. In practice this is very similar to the use of the future tenses in English.

Such meanings are obviously predominant in contexts where the future time reference is otherwise clear from the context and the present or perfect tense could be used (see **12.1.3** and **12.2.5a**):

Morgen **wird** es bestimmt **schneien**	*It will definitely snow tomorrow*
Ich **werde** es heute Abend noch **erledigen**	I am going to finish it tonight
Morgen **wird** er die Arbeit **beendet haben**	*He'll have finished the work tomorrow*

In practice these tenses may not express a notion of futurity at all, with the future expressing a possibility in the present and the future perfect a possibility that something happened in the past.

Sie **wird** bereits zu Hause **sein**	*She'll be home already*
Er ist nicht gekommen. Er **wird** wieder zu viel zu tun **haben**	He hasn't come. He'll have too much to do again
Sie **wird** den Zug **verpasst haben**	She'll have missed the train
Sie **wird** sich gestern ein neues Handy **gekauft haben**	*She'll have bought a new mobile/ cellphone yesterday*

When used in this way to express a possibility, these tenses are often accompanied by the particle ***wohl*** (see **9.1.34a**):

Sie wird **wohl** bereits zu Hause sein

Sie wird **wohl** den Zug verpasst haben

This sense of the future and future perfect is very similar to the meaning of ***dürfte*** (see **15.2.2**), so that *Sie wird bereits zu Hause sein* means much the same as *Sie dürfte bereits zu Hause sein.*

12.4 The pluperfect tense

For the forms of the pluperfect tense in German, see **10.3.1** and **Table 10.13**.

12.4.1 Uses of the pluperfect tense

(a) The pluperfect tense indicates a past within the past

In this way, the pluperfect is a **relative tense** and like the English pluperfect, it places an action or event further back in the past than the time of the context. It is characteristically used in clauses introduced by ***nachdem*** (see **17.3.4**), where the action or event in that clause precedes the action in the main clause:

Nachdem sie **gegangen war**, fiel ihr ein, was sie **vergessen hatte**	*After she had gone she remembered what she had forgotten*
Das bemerkte man erst, nachdem man Platz **genommen hatte** (*Morgner*)	*You only noticed that after you had sat down*

But it is used in many other types of context to indicate a more **remote past**:

Wir warteten, bis der Zug **abgefahren war**	*We waited until the train had left*
Sie kamen zu spät, denn das Hochwasser **hatte** den Damm schon **überflutet**	*They came too late, as the high water had already flooded over the embankment*

(b) The perfect tense is occasionally used where one would expect a pluperfect

This may emphasize the immediacy of a state or an action. The effect is rather similar to that of the 'historic present', see **12.1.4**:

Dann seufzte sie auf eine Weise, die mir deutlich machte, wie alt sie **geworden ist** (*Böll*)	*Then she sighed in a way which made it clear to me how old she had become*

This usage is quite frequent in writing as well as in everyday speech.

(c) The past tense is sometimes used for an expected pluperfect

This usage is typically literary and is usually motivated by stylistic reasons, with the one-word past tense being preferred in context:

… doch ergab der Befund jene hoffnungslose Krankheit, die man **vermutete** (*Dürrenmatt*)	*… but the investigation revealed the terminal disease which had been suspected*

(d) The pluperfect tense is sometimes used simply to refer to the past

In colloquial speech the pluperfect tense is sometimes used simply to refer to the past, where a past or perfect tense would be expected:

Eva **hatte** dich **gesucht**	*Eva was looking for you*
Wer **war** das **gewesen** ?	*Who was that?*

This 'pseudopluperfect', is quite common in everyday speech, but it is not considered standard.

12.4.2 Complex pluperfect tense forms

In colloquial speech in South Germany a **pluperfect** tense can be formed with the **perfect** tense of the auxiliaries *haben* or *sein* so that *Ich **habe** ihn* **gesehen gehabt**, for example, is heard for standard German *Ich hatte ihn gesehen.*

Forms like this are now widespread in spoken German and no longer restricted to the South. Indeed, if an extra dimension of remoteness in time is needed, the **pluperfect** tense of the auxiliary is sometimes used, e.g. *Sie **hatte** ihn **gesehen gehabt**, bevor er sie bemerkt hatte.* This is very common in spoken German if the action has been reversed again, e.g.:

Sie **hatte** ihren Schlüssel **vergessen gehabt**	*She had forgotten her key* (but she's remembered it again now)

These complex pluperfects are typical of informal colloquial registers and although they have been present in the language for centuries they are generally regarded as non-standard. However, they are not unknown in writing:

Er dachte: Du kannst jetzt nichts gesehen haben, du kannst wegdrücken … und **hast** bloß den Anschluss **verloren gehabt** und bist kein Jäger (*Gaiser*)	*He thought 'You can't have seen anything now, you can sneak off … You had just got left behind and you're not a rifleman'*
Wir **haben** uns alle schon daran **gewöhnt gehabt**, dass nichts geschieht, aber immer etwas geschehen soll (*Musil*)	*We had all got used to the idea that nothing was going to happen but that something always ought to happen*

12.5 German equivalents for the English progressive tenses

There are no PROGRESSIVE TENSES **in German**, and the difference between the English **progressive present** tense 'He **is singing** well' (i.e. at the moment) and the **simple present** tense 'He **sings** well' (i.e. usually) cannot be expressed by using different forms of the verb in German. In most contexts the distinction is simply ignored in German and 'Er singt gut' is used for both these English sentences.

Nevertheless, **there are contexts where we need to make it clear in German that we are dealing with a continuous or unfinished action**. For instance, it is clearly essential to be able to distinguish between *The old man drowned* and *The old man was drowning*.

In such contexts, German has a number of possibilities for making it clear that the action was continuous or unfinished, i.e.:

(a) by using an adverb

(i) ***eben*** or ***gerade*** are very frequently used to indicate an action in progress:

Ich schreibe **eben** einen Brief an Anja	*I'm writing a letter to Anja*
Er liest **gerade** die Zeitung von Sonntag	*He's reading Sunday's newspaper*

(ii) ***schon*** or ***gleich*** can often be used with verbs of motion:

Ich fahre **schon**	*I'm leaving*
Sie kommt **gleich**	*She's coming*

(iii) **Other adverbials** or **particles** can be used in other contexts:

Ich habe ihn **letzthin** zweimal in der Woche gesehen	*I've been meeting him twice a week (recently)*
Regina wohnt **zur Zeit** in Fulda	Regina is living in Fulda
Ich kümmere mich **eben mal** darum	*I'm seeing to it now*

(iv) The sense of **habitual** or **repeated action** which is expressed by a **simple** (i.e. non-progressive) tense in English can be indicated by an adverb in German:

Ich stehe **immer** um sechs auf	*I always get up at six*
Sie spielt **meistens** gut	*She (usually) plays well*

(b) by using (*gerade/eben*) *dabei sein* followed by an infinitive with zu

Ich bin (**gerade**) **dabei**, das Zimmer ein bisschen aufzuräumen	*I'm just tidying the room up a bit*
Gestern war er **gerade dabei**, Krieg und Frieden" zu lesen	*He was reading* War and Peace *yesterday*

(c) by using a construction with an infinitival noun

(i) In standard German ***beim*** is used with an infinitival noun (see **11.4.2b**):

Als seine Frau zurückkam, war er **beim Kochen**	*When his wife returned, he was cooking*
Wir waren **beim Kartenspielen**, als er klingelte	*We were playing cards when he rang the bell*

(ii) Especially in informal registers, ***am*** is used with an infinitival noun:

Der alte Mann war **am Ertrinken**	*The old man was drowning*
Ich bin **am Überlegen**	I'm thinking (about it)
Wir sind **am Arbeiten**	We are working
In Köln ist es immer **am Regnen**	It's always raining in Cologne
Diese Lobby ist ständig **am Wachsen** (*FAZ – Leserbrief*)	*This lobby is growing all the time*

This form was originally characteristic of the Rhineland (see **11.4.2a**), but it has recently become much more widely used in spoken German in other areas, not least because it is by far the neatest possibility in contexts like the first example above. However, many authorities still consider it to be non-standard and it is still unusual in writing.

(d) by using a noun with a prepositional phrase

Wir sind **an der Arbeit**	*We're working*
Er liest **in der Zeitung**	He's reading the newspaper
Sie strickte **an einem Strumpf**	*She was knitting a stocking*

(e) by using a different verb

Some German verbs, especially those with prefixes, imply the completion of an action. The corresponding unprefixed verbs do not necessarily imply that the action has finished and can in certain contexts correspond more closely to the sense of an English progressive tense:

Sie **erkämpften** die Freiheit ihres Landes	*They fought for their country's freedom* (i.e. they were successful)
Sie **kämpften** für die Freiheit ihres Landes	*They were fighting for their country's freedom*
Sie **erstiegen** den Berg	They climbed the mountain
Sie **stiegen** auf den Berg	*They were climbing the mountain* (i.e. in the process of climbing, or only part of the way)
Wir **haben** die Würste **aufgegessen**	*We ate the sausages (up)*
Wir **haben** die Würste **gegessen**	*We were eating the sausages*

(f) The perfect progressive

The perfect progressive is typically used to indicate that an action beginning in the past is still going on at the moment of speaking, e.g. ***I have been waiting here for an hour***. German uses the simple present tense in these contexts, see **12.1.2**.

The passive

Table 13.1 Active and passive voice

active voice	Die Schlange **frisst** den Frosch
passive voice	Der Frosch **wird** (von der Schlange) **gefressen**

We typically express actions by using the ACTIVE VOICE, both in English and in German. The active sentence tells us what is happening and who or what is doing it. But we can present a different perspective on an action by using the PASSIVE VOICE, which places the emphasis on what is going on, without necessarily saying who or what is doing it.

Most active sentences with a transitive verb (i.e. a verb which has an accusative object, see **16.3**) can be turned into passive sentences. The ACCUSATIVE OBJECT of the sentence in the active voice becomes the SUBJECT of the sentence in the passive voice, as **Table 13.1** shows. The subject of the active sentence (the person or thing carrying out the action, called the AGENT) can also appear in a phrase using *von* or *durch* (= English 'by'), but it is often left out altogether. The possibility of talking about an action without saying who or what did it is a major reason to use the passive rather than the active.

There are **two passive forms in German**, using the auxiliary verbs ***werden*** or ***sein*** together with the **past participle**:

- The ***werden*** **-passive** (e.g. *die Stadt* **wurde zerstört**) expresses a process and is closely related to the corresponding active voice. In German it is called the ***Vorgangspassiv***.
- The ***sein*** **-passive** (e.g. *die Stadt* ***war zerstört***) expresses a

state. Its use is more restricted than that of the *werden* -passive. In German it is called the ***Zustandspassiv***.

The use of these passives, and other German constructions which are the equivalent of passives, is explained in the following sections of this chapter. These cover:

- The ***werden* -passive** (section **13.1**)
- The ***sein*- passive**, and the differences between it and the *werden*- passive (section **13.2**)
- The use of ***von*** and ***durch*** for English 'by' with the passive (section **13.3**)
- Other German constructions with **passive meaning** (section **13.4**)

Some textbooks of German for English learners suggest that the passive is not used very often in German and its use should be avoided where possible. This is quite misleading. The passive is used frequently in German, particularly in formal writing (especially in technical registers and journalism), but it is by no means unusual in spoken registers.

However, it does tend to be used rather less than in English. One reason for this is that a passive is often used in English to move something other than the subject to the beginning of a sentence, in order to focus on it. In German, with its more flexible word order, this emphasis can be achieved simply by shifting the elements in the sentence round. Thus, the following sentences represent natural equivalents in the two languages:

Diesen Roman hat **Thomas Mann** während eines Aufenthaltes in Italien **geschrieben**	*This novel* **was written by Thomas Mann** *during a stay in Italy*

In German, with its more flexible word order, the accusative object can be placed before the verb and the subject after it, in order to change the focus of the sentence, and there is no need to use a passive construction, as in English. More details on this are given in **19.2.3b**.

13.1 The *werden*-passive

Table 13.2 Active and passive sentences

Tense	Active	Passive
Present	Der Arzt **heilt** den Patienten	Der Patient **wird** (vom Arzt) **geheilt**
Past	*The doctor* **heals** *the patient*	*The patient* **is healed** *(by the doctor)*
Perfect	Die Bauleute **rissen** das Haus **ab**	Das Haus **wurde** (von den Bauleuten) **abgerissen**
Future	*The builders* **pulled down** *the house*	*The house* **was pulled down** *(by the builders)*
	Die Firma **hat** den Angestellten **entlassen**	Der Angestellte **ist** (von der Firma) **entlassen worden**
	The company **has sacked** *the employee*	*The employee* **has been sacked** *(by the company)*
	Der Computer **wird** das Buch **verdrängen**	Das Buch **wird** (vom Computer) **verdrängt werden**
	The computer **will replace** *the book*	*The book* **will be replaced** *(by the computer)*

13.1.1 The *werden*-passive: tenses and moods

The *werden* -passive has the **same range of tenses and moods** as the active voice, and **Table 13.1** shows the relationship between the tenses of the active and passive voice in the indicative mood. The full conjugation of these tenses is shown in **Table 10.14**. For passive forms in the subjunctive mood, see section **10.5**.

(a) The use of the passive tenses is in general the same as in the active

(see **Chapter 12**). There is some slight variation in use in a few instances:

(i) The **future tense** is little used in the passive, and the present tense is preferred unless there is a risk of being misunderstood (see **12.3**). Thus, in the sentence

Das Buch **wird** im nächsten Semester **diskutiert werden**	*The book will be discussed next semester*

normal usage will prefer the present tense *Das Buch* **wird** *nächste Woche* **diskutiert** rather than the future, and this is possible because the phrase *nächste Woche* makes the time reference clear. However, in the sentence

Das Haus **wird abgerissen werden**	*The house will be pulled down*

we cannot replace the future tense by the present without changing the meaning. *Das Haus* ***wird abgerissen*** can only mean 'The house is being pulled down'.

(ii) The **past tense** of the passive is quite common in both written and spoken German, even in contexts where the perfect tense might be expected in the active voice (see **12.2.3b**).

(b) The imperative of the *werden*-passive is rarely used

In practice, only the ***sein* -passive** is used for **commands** in the passive, e.g. *Sei gegrüßt! Sei beruhigt!* (see **14.1.1**).

13.1.2 The *werden*-passive can be formed from most transitive verbs

i.e. those verbs which are used with a **direct object** in the **accusative case**, see **16.3**.

(a) The direct object becomes the subject of the corresponding passive construction

The accusative object of the active verb becomes the subject of the corresponding passive construction:

Mein Vater liest **diesen Roman** *My father is reading this novel*	→	**Dieser Roman** wird von meinem Vater gelesen *This novel is being read by my father*

Further examples are given in **Table 13.2**.

(b) A few transitive verbs cannot be used in the *werden*-passive

This group consists of a number of verbs of knowing, containing, possessing and receiving, in particular ***bedeuten***, ***bekommen***, ***besitzen***, ***enthalten***, ***erhalten***, ***haben***, ***kennen***, ***kriegen***, ***umfassen*** and ***wissen***.

These verbs cannot be used in the passive in German, although some of their usual English equivalents can. In German other constructions are used for verbs like this, in particular **active forms** of another verb or a construction with ***man***:

Dieses Schloss gehört dem Grafen von Libowitz (i.e. *not * wird … besessen*)	*This palace* **is owned** *by Count von Libowitz*
Ihr Brief traf gestern ein (i.e. *not * wurde … erhalten*)	*Your letter* **was received** *yesterday*
	It **was not known** *how many children would come*

Man wusste nicht, wie viele Kinder kommen würden (i.e. *not* *es *wurde ... gewusst*)	

enthalten can be used with *sein*, e.g. *Wieviel Essig ist in diesem Gefäß enthalten?* but this is not really a passive construction. A passive of *erhalten* can be formed with *bleiben*, see **13.2.2b**.

(c) No passive can be formed with the verbs of perception followed by a bare infinitive

(see **11.3.1b**). These verbs can be used in the passive with an 'ing'-form in English, but equivalent sentences in German have other constructions, usually with the active voice:

Man hörte ihn singen	*He was heard singing*
Ein Vorbeigehender sah ihn in das Haus einbrechen	*He was seen breaking into the house by a passer-by*

13.1.3 Dative, genitive or prepositional objects and the passive

In German only the accusative (direct) object of a transitive verb can become the subject of a passive construction.

This is quite different to English and means that **the dative object**, **the genitive object or the prepositional object** of a verb **can never become the subject of a passive** construction in German.

(a) Verbs with dative objects

If a verb which takes a dative object is used in the passive, **the dative object remains in the dative case**. This applies to all those verbs which govern the dative case, and have no accusative object (see **16.4**).

Astrid dankte **ihm** für seine Hilfe *Astrid thanked him for his help*	→	**Ihm** wurde für seine Hilfe gedankt *He was thanked for his help*

As the dative object remains in the dative, the verbs in these passive constructions are **subject-less** (or **impersonal**) and the verb always has **the endings of the third person singular**. Further examples:

Die Polizei kann **ihnen** helfen *The police can help them*	→	**Ihnen** kann geholfen werden *They can be helped*
Er empfahl **uns**, eine Kur zu nehmen *He recommended me to take a course of treatment at a spa*	→	**Uns** wurde empfohlen, eine Kur zu nehmen *We were recommended to take a course of treatment at a spa*

The dative object does not need to be in first position, before the verb, but if it is placed later in the sentence (with a slight change in emphasis) the pronoun ***es*** (see **3.6.2a**) has to be used in first position. Compare the following (equally acceptable) alternatives to the examples above:

Es kann ihnen geholfen werden	**Es** wurde uns empfohlen, eine Kur zu nehmen

(b) Verbs with an accusative and a dative object

With verbs which have both an accusative object and a dative object (so-called *einem etwas* verbs, see **16.4.1**), the **dative object remains in the dative in the passive**. This is because, in German, **only an accusative object can become the subject of a passive verb**.

This differs from English, where, with many verbs which have two objects, either can become the subject of the passive. An English sentence like ***He gave the old man the money*** can be converted into

the passive in two ways, with the direct object *the money* or the indirect object *the old man* as the subject. Compare the following sentences and their German equivalents:

The money (direct object) *was given to the old man*	**Das Geld** wurde dem alten Mann gegeben
The old man (indirect object) *was given the money*	**Dem alten Mann** wurde das Geld gegeben

The direct object *das Geld* of the German sentence *Er gab dem alten Mann das Geld* can be the subject of the passive sentence in German, as in English, but not the indirect (dative) object *dem alten Mann*, which must remain in the dative case in German.

The original direct object *das Geld* becomes the subject of both the German passive sentences, and this makes for an even more striking difference between the languages if the indirect object is in the plural, since the verb must still agree with the singular subject *das Geld*. Compare:

The money (direct object) **was** *given to the old men*	**Das Geld** wurde den alten Männern gegeben
The old men (indirect object) **were** *given the money*	**Den alten Männern wurde** das Geld gegeben

A dative object can become the subject of a passive construction with *bekommen* or *kriegen*, see **13.4.2**.

(c) German equivalents for English sentences with a passive infinitive

Sentences like 'He could not hope to be helped' are quite usual in English, but in German **the passive infinitive of a verb which governs the dative cannot be used in an infinitive clause with *zu***. We cannot say * *Er konnte nicht hoffen geholfen zu werden*, since *helfen* governs a dative and its object cannot be used as the subject of a passive construction. A *dass* -clause has to be used in the equivalent

sentences in German:

Er konnte nicht hoffen, dass ihm geholfen wurde	*He could not hope to be helped*
Er besteht darauf, dass ihm geantwortet wird	*He insists on being answered*

(d) Verbs with genitive or prepositional objects

Like dative objects, **genitive objects and prepositional objects** (see **16.5** and **16.7**) **cannot become the subject of corresponding passive constructions**. They remain in the same form in an impersonal construction, with the verb in the third person singular form:

Sie gedachten **der Toten** *They remembered the dead*	→	**Der Toten** wurde gedacht *The dead were remembered*
Meine Mutter sorgt **für die Kinder** *My mother is taking care of the children*	→	**Für die Kinder** wird gesorgt *The children are being taken care of*

With these verbs, too, the genitive or the prepositional phrase can be placed later in the sentence rather than at the beginning, but, similarly, *es* then has to be inserted before the verb:

Es wurde der Toten gedacht	**Es** wird für die Kinder gesorgt

13.1.4 The 'subjectless' or impersonal *werden*-passive

(a) The *werden*-passive can be used without a subject to denote an activity in general

A sentence like ***Es wird getanzt*** simply means 'There is dancing going on' without any indication of who is doing it. No comparable

construction exists in English. The verb has the third person singular endings:

Sie hörten, wie im Nebenzimmer **geredet wurde**	*They heard people talking in the next room*
Hier darf nicht **geraucht werden**	Smoking is not allowed here
Vor Hunden **wird gewarnt**	Beware of dogs
Heute **ist** mit den Bauarbeiten **begonnen worden** (*ARD*)	*They started construction today*

(b) A subjectless passive can be formed from any verb which expresses a continuous activity

This construction can be used not only with transitive verbs, but also with other verbs which cannot otherwise be used in the passive, i.e. **intransitive verbs** and, in colloquial German, reflexive verbs:

Im Flugzeug darf ab Herbst **gesurft** und **gesimst werden**	*From the autumn it will be permitted to use the internet and send text messages in aeroplanes*
An dem Abend **wurde** viel **gesungen**	There was a lot of singing that evening
Jetzt **wird sich gewaschen**	*It's time to get washed*

(c) The use of es in impersonal passive constructions

In these impersonal passive constructions, the pronoun *es* is inserted in a main clause if there is no other word or phrase before the verb (see **3.6.2a** for further details):

Es wurde auf den Straßen getanzt	*There was dancing in the streets*
Es wird besonders rücksichtslos geparkt (*ARD*)	*People are parking in a particularly inconsiderate way*

(d) The subjectless passive can be used to give commands

(see **14.1.3c** for further details):

Jetzt wird gearbeitet!	*Let's get down to work now*
Jetzt wird nicht gelacht!	*No laughing now!*

13.2 The *sein*-passive

13.2.1 Forms of the *sein*-passive

The conjugation of verbs in the indicative mood of the *sein* -passive is given in **Table 10.15**. Subjunctive forms are explained in section **10.5**. In practice, only a limited range of tenses and moods of the *sein* -passive is in use:

Table 13.3 Forms of the *sein* -passive

Present tense	Ich **bin** beruhigt
Imperative	**Sei** beruhigt!
Past tense	Ich **war** beruhigt
Konjunktiv I	Ich **sei** beruhigt
Konjunktiv II	Ich **wäre** beruhigt

The past tense tends to be used rather than the perfect tense, although the perfect tense is sometimes heard in spoken German and is occasionally found in writing:

Vierzig Lehrer **sind** gestern als krank **gemeldet gewesen** (*Zeit*)	*Forty teachers were reported sick yesterday*

The future tense, e.g. *Die Bilder* **werden** *morgen entwickelt* **sein** is very seldom used.

The existence of two distinct passive forms in German, and the fact that the less frequently used of them looks like the English passive with *be*, means that English learners need to pay particular attention to the distinction between the two.

As with the *werden* -passive, see **13.1.3**, only the accusative object of a transitive verb can become the subject of a *sein* -passive. With verbs governing a dative, genitive or prepositional object, a 'subjectless' construction must also be used in the *sein* -passive:

Damit ist **den Kranken** nicht geholfen	*The patients have not been helped by that*
Für die Verletzten ist gesorgt	*The wounded have been taken care of*

In practice, relatively few intransitive verbs are used in the *sein* -passive. The most frequent are *dienen, helfen, nützen, schaden, sorgen für*.

13.2.2 The *sein*-passive and the *werden*-passive

(a) The *sein*-passive refers to a state, whilst the *werden*-passive refers to an action

This is reflected in its German name: ***Zustandspassiv***. It is used to describe a **state** which the subject of the verb is in as the result of a previous action. The *werden* -passive, on the other hand, relates an **action** or **process**, hence its German name: ***Vorgangspassiv***.

The following sentence illustrates the difference between the two passives:

Als ich um fünf kam, **war** die Tür **geschlossen**, aber ich weiß nicht, wann sie **geschlossen wurde**	*When I came at five the door was shut, but I don't know when it was shut*

In the first clause, someone had **already shut** the door by the time I arrived, i.e. it was in a **state** of being shut, and for this reason the *sein* -passive is used. In the last case I am referring to the time when the **action** of shutting the door occurred, and the *werden* -passive is used.

The *werden* -passive is more frequent than the *sein* -passive and it can be used with more verbs. Nevertheless, the *sein* -passive can be quite common in some registers, e.g. in newspaper reports, which often have reason to refer to states or to the results of actions, and also in narrative fiction:

> Deutschland **ist** fest in die NATO **eingebunden** (*Welt*)
>
> Dass die Wahlergebnisse in der DDR **gefälscht waren**, bestreitet auch Modrow nicht (*Spiegel*)

The following examples show the distinct meanings of the two passives:

Der Tisch **wird gedeckt**	*The table is being laid* (i.e. someone is performing the action of laying the table)
Der Tisch **ist gedeckt**	*The table is laid* (i.e. someone has already laid it)
Die Stadt **wurde** 1993 **zerstört**	*The town was destroyed in 1993* (i.e. the action took place in 1993)
Die Stadt **war zerstört**	*The town was destroyed* (i.e. someone had already destroyed it)
Das Rathaus **wurde** allmählich von Demonstranten **umringt**	*The town hall was (being) gradually surrounded by demonstrators* (i.e. the demonstrators were in the process of surrounding it)
Das Rathaus **war** von Demonstranten **umringt**	*The town hall was surrounded by demonstrators* (i.e. the demonstrators were already all round the town hall)

(b) Indicators pointing to the use of the *werden*-passive or the sein-passive

In practice, there are a number of indicators which can prove helpful in determining whether to use the *sein* -passive or the *werden* -passive:

(i) The *werden* -passive often corresponds to an English progressive tense, while this is never the case with the *sein* -passive. This is especially the case in the present tense.

Die Straße wird repariert	*The road is being repaired*
Der Tisch wird gedeckt	The table is being laid
Die Stadt wurde in diesem Augenblick zerstört	*The city was being destroyed at that precise moment*

(ii) As the *sein* -passive relates the state resulting from a previous action, its meaning is close to that of the perfect tense, since the perfect tense often expresses a result (see **12.2.3**). This means, for example, that the following pairs of sentences are very close in meaning:

Das Haus **ist gebaut**	Das Haus **ist gebaut worden**
Die Stadt **war zerstört**	Die Stadt **war zerstört worden**

As a consequence, the natural English equivalent of a German *sein* -passive is often a perfect or pluperfect tense rather than a present or a past tense:

Der Wagen **ist repariert**	*The car has been repaired*
Rund 2500 Polizeibeamte riegelten die Stadt ab, über die ein umfassendes Demonstrationsverbot **verhängt war** (*Welt*)	*About 2500 police officers cordoned off the city, which had been made subject to a comprehensive ban on demonstrations*

(iii) In the *sein* -passive, the past participle is essentially descriptive and is being used with the force of an adjective describing the state of the subject of the verb. For example,

geöffnet in the sentence ***Die Tür ist geöffnet*** has much the same function as *offen* in ***Die Tür ist offen***. Compare also:

Der Brief **ist geschrieben**	Der Brief ist fertig
Die Stadt **war zerstört**	Die Stadt war kaputt

The past participles of many reflexive verbs (which cannot form a passive) can similarly be used with *sein* with the force of an adjective:

Das Mädchen **ist verliebt**	(compare: *Das Mädchen hat sich verliebt*)
Ich **bin erholt**	(compare: *Ich habe mich erholt*)

The past participle can be used in a similar way with the verbs ***bleiben*** and ***scheinen***:

Das Museum **bleibt geschlossen**	*The museum remains closed*
Der Wagen **schien** leicht **beschädigt**	The car seemed slightly damaged
Nur Bruchstücke dieser Skulptur **sind erhalten geblieben**	*Only fragments of this sculpture have been preserved*

(iv) As the *sein* -passive expresses a state resulting from a previous action, it **can only be used with verbs whose action produces a clear result**, e.g. *bauen*, *begraben*, *beunruhigen*, *brechen*, *öffne n*, *reparieren*, *schreiben*, *verletzen*, *waschen*, *zerstöre n*, etc.:

Meine Hand ist verletzt	*My hand is injured* (and you can see the resulting injury)
Mein Wagen ist beschädigt	*My car is damaged* (and you can see the resulting damage)

By contrast, verbs whose action produces no tangible or visible result, like *bewundern* or *zeigen*, cannot be used in the *sein* -passive at all, as admiring or showing do not involve any kind of result. Other verbs which are typically not used in the *sein* -passive include:

anbieten	*offer*	brauchen	*need*
begegnen	meet	erinnern	remind
bemerken	notice	loben	praise
betrachten	*look at*	sehen	*see*

(c) The *sein*-passive can indicate a continuous state

Diese Insel **ist** von Kannibalen **bewohnt**	*The island is inhabited by cannibals*
Die Oberrheinebene **ist** durch ihre Randgebirge vor rauhen Winden **geschützt** (*Brinkmann*)	The Upper Rhine plain is protected from harsh winds by the hills which fringe it
Die Häuser **sind** nur durch einen Drahtzaun von der Müllverbrennungsanlage **getrennt**	The houses are only separated from the incinerating plant by a wire fence
Das Esszimmer **ist** von einem großen Kronleuchter **beleuchtet**	The dining-room is lit by a large chandelier
Die Bücher in der alten Bibliothek **sind** mit Staub **bedeckt**	*The books in the old library are covered with dust*

Here we are not dealing with the result of a process, but with a lasting state, often a permanent one. In such sentences, the *werden-* passive and the *sein-* passive are interchangeable as long as the *werden* -passive cannot be interpreted as referring to an action. Thus, the following are equally acceptable alternatives to the first four examples above:

> Diese Insel **wird** von Kannibalen bewohnt
>
> Die Oberrheinebene **wird** durch ihre Randgebirge vor rauhen Winde geschützt
>
> Die Häuser **werden** nur durch einen Drahtzaun von der Müllverbrennungsanlage getrennt
>
> Das Esszimmer **wird** von einem großen Kronleuchter beleuchtet

But *not Die Bücher in der alten Bibliothek* **werden** *mit Staub bedeckt*,

as this would mean someone is actively engaged in covering them with dust.

(d) The *sein*-passive and the *werden*-passive with geboren

Current usage with this verb is as follows:

(i) ***Ich bin geboren*** is used when no other circumstances or only the place of birth are mentioned:

Wann **sind** Sie **geboren** ? Ich **bin** in Hamburg **geboren**

(ii) ***Ich wurde geboren*** is used if further circumstances, or the date, are mentioned:

Ich **wurde** im Jahre 1985 in Hamburg **geboren** Als ich **geboren wurde**, schneite es

(iii) Referring to people who are dead, either passive can be used:

Goethe **wurde/war** im Jahre 1749 in Frankfurt **geboren**

13.3 *von, durch* and *mit* with the passive

An important reason to use the passive rather than the active is to avoid mentioning who is performing the action, and this is the case with 90% of passive sentences in German. However, if required, the person or thing carrying out the action can be included in a passive construction by adding a prepositional phrase introduced by ***von*** or ***durch***, which correspond to English *by*, and ***mit*** is also often used with passives.

The traditional rule of thumb is that ***von* is used with persons**, ***durch***

with things. This is a useful guideline, but it is not fully reliable.

Phrases with *von* or *durch* occur most often with the *werden* -passive. With the *sein* -passive they occur mainly when it is a matter of a continuing state, as in **13.2.2c**.

(a) *von* indicates the agent who actually carries out the action

This is usually a person, but can be a force of nature:

Ich war **von meinem Onkel** gewarnt worden	*I had been warned by my uncle*
Sie wurde **von zwei Polizeibeamten** verhaftet	She was arrested by two police officers
Die Stadt wurde **von einem großen Waldbrand** bedroht	*The city was threatened by a huge forest fire*

(b) *durch* indicates the means by which the action is carried out

This is most often a thing which is the involuntary cause of the occurrence, but it can be a person acting as an intermediary. Thus, we would say *Ich wurde* **durch einen Boten** *benachrichtigt* 'I was informed by a messenger', not *von einem Boten*, because the messenger was bringing a message from someone else.

Die Ernte wurde **durch den Hagel** vernichtet	*The crop was destroyed by hail*
Ich wurde **durch den starken Verkehr** aufgehalten	I was held up by the heavy traffic
Die Hühnerpest wird **durch ein mikroskopisch nicht nachweisbares Virus** verursacht (*ND*)	*Fowl pest is caused by a virus which is not detectable under the microscope*

(c) The distinction between *von* and *durch* is not always upheld

In practice there can be considerable hesitation between *von* and *durch*, as it is often not wholly clear whether we are dealing with the 'agent' or the 'means'. *von* is always usual for persons who obviously carried out the action themselves. However, when this could be a matter of interpretation, or with 'things' (especially natural forces like storms and earthquakes) which people might think of as actually carrying out an action, either *von* or *durch* can be acceptable, as in the following sentences:

Sie ist **von den Demonstranten/ durch die Demonstranten** aufgehalten worden	*She was held up by the demonstrators*
Der Baum ist **von dem Blitz/durch den Blitz** getroffen worden	*The tree has been struck by lightning*

In the first sentence *von den Demonstranten* could imply that the demonstrators held her up deliberately, whereas *durch die Demonstranten* could mean that it just happened to be the case that she was held up by them. However, such fine distinctions are often ignored in practice.

(d) *von* and *durch* in the same sentence

In practice, the difference between *von* and *durch* is most clear when both are used in the same sentence:

Ich war **von meinem Onkel durch seinen Sohn** gewarnt worden	*I had been warned by my uncle through his son* (My uncle is doing the warning, his son is the intermediary)
Das Gebäude wurde **von Terroristen durch einen Sprengstoffanschlag** zerstört	*The building was destroyed by terrorists in a bomb attack* (Terrorists destroyed it, the bombs

were the means)

(e) A phrase with *mit* can be used to indicate the instrument used to perform an action

Das Schloss musste **mit einem Hammer** geöffnet werden	*The lock had to be opened with a hammer*
Dieser Brief ist **mit der Hand** geschrieben	*This letter was written by hand*

13.4 Other passive constructions

German has a wide range of other ways of expressing passive ideas, or constructions which are used where English typically uses a passive.

13.4.1 *man*

man is often used in German where English naturally uses a passive (see also **5.5.18**):

Man sagt, dass …	*It is said that …*
Man hatte ihn davor **gewarnt**	*He had been warned about it*
Das **macht man** nicht	*That's not done*

13.4.2 Passive constructions with *bekommen* and *kriegen*

(a) The use of *bekommen* and *kriegen* in passive constructions

As explained in **13.1.3a**, a dative object cannot be turned into the

subject of the *werden* -passive. However, if *bekommen* or *kriegen* (or, much less frequently, *erhalten*) is used with the past participle, the dative object of that verb can be made the subject of the sentence:

Ich schenke **meinem Bruder** das Buch	→	**Mein Bruder kriegt/bekommt** das Buch (von mir) **geschenkt**
Ich widerspreche **meinem Bruder**		**Mein Bruder kriegt/bekommt** (von mir) **widersprochen**

This construction is chiefly found in speech (especially with *kriegen*), and not all Germans accept it as correct in writing, although it has become very frequent. It is used in particular with verbs which express an action and where the original dative object can be interpreted in some way as receiving something.

(b) The *bekommen/kriegen*-passive can be formed from various types of dative object

Specifically:

> (i) from the **dative object of *einem etwas* verbs**, i.e. a verb which governs both a dative and an accusative object (see **16.4.1**). In practice the *bekommen* / *kriegen* passive occurs most frequently with this type of verb, and these constructions are now generally accepted. The English equivalent may be a passive, or a construction with 'have' or 'get' with a past participle. Active sentences like
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Man zahlt **mir** das Geld regelmäßig aus
Somebody pays me the money regularly | Man hat **uns** viel gezeigt
Somebody showed us a lot |
>
> can be rephrased with the *bekommen/kriegen* -passive as:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Ich **bekomme/kriege** das Geld regelmäßig **ausgezahlt** *I am paid the money regularly/ I have/get the money paid to me* | Wir haben viel **gezeigt bekommen/gekriegt**
We were shown a lot/ We had a lot shown to us |

regularly

This construction is possible with most verbs which have an accusative and a dative object, with the notable exception of *geben*.

(ii) from the **dative object** of verbs which only govern a dative object (see **16.4.2**). The use of the *bekommen/kriegen* passive with these verbs is common in colloquial speech, but not (yet) widely accepted in writing:

Sie **bekam** gratuliert	*She was congratulated*
Vera **bekommt** von dir geholfen	Vera is being helped by you
Er **bekam** von niemandem widersprochen	*He was contradicted by nobody*

This construction is not possible with verbs which do not denote an activity or whose dative object cannot be interpreted as a recipient, e.g. *ähneln*, *begegnen*, *gefallen*, *gehören* or *schaden*.

(iii) from the dative of advantage or the dative of possession (see **2.5.2** and **2.5.3**). This often corresponds to an English construction with 'get'. As in the previous case, this use of the *bekommen/ kriegen* passive with these verbs is colloquial and not widely accepted in writing:

Sie **kriegte** den Wagen **repariert**	*She got her car repaired*
Man **bekommt** den Schlips **abgeschnitten** (*Grzimek*)	You get your tie cut off
Er **bekam** von mir die Wohnung **renoviert**	He got his flat renovated by me
Das Haus **bekam** einen Balkon **angebaut**	*The house got a balcony built on*

(c) Some subjects of a construction with *kriegen/ bekommen* do not come from a dative

(i) The construction with *kriegen* or *bekommen* is sometimes used with verbs which take two accusatives, e.g. *lehren* 'teach' and *schimpfen* 'tell off', 'bawl out' (see **16.3.3**). The conditions are the same as for other uses of the construction, i.e. that the verb denotes an action and the subject of the *kriegen/bekommen* construction is a recipient. This usage is strictly colloquial:

Er **bekommt** (von mir) **geschimpft**	*He's getting told off (by me)*
Der Junge **bekommt** die Vokabeln **gelehrt**	*The boy is getting the words taught him*

(ii) It is used in some other contexts as the equivalent to an English construction with 'get':

Ich **kriege** den Brief bis heute Abend **geschrieben**	*I'll get the letter written by tonight*

13.4.3 Reflexive verbs

Reflexive verbs (see **16.3.5**) **are a frequent alternative to a passive construction**, and verbs which denote accomplishments or activities can be used with *sich* to give the sense of a passive, e.g. *Das erklärt sich leicht* 'That is easily explained'. A sense of ability (= *können*) is sometimes implied.

(a) Reflexive constructions from transitive verbs

In most instances an adverbial of manner is needed to complete the sense:

Das **lernt sich** rasch	*That is/can be quickly learned*
Das Buch **verkaufte sich** in Rekordauflagen	The book was sold in record numbers
Mein Verdacht **hat sich bestätigt**	*My suspicions have been confirmed*

(b) Reflexive constructions from intransitive verbs

Reflexive constructions from intransitive verbs are impersonal. An adverbial of manner **and** an adverbial of place or time are usually needed to complete the sense:

Es fährt sich gut auf der Autobahn	*You can drive well on the motorway*
In der Hauptstadt **lebt es sich** besser als anderswo (*Zeit*)	*You can live better in the capital than anywhere else*

(c) Other reflexive verbs

A reflexive verb is the closest German equivalent to many English passives or constructions which look like passives:

sich ärgern	*be annoyed*	sich schämen	*be ashamed*
sich freuen	*be pleased*	sich verbinden	*be associated*

13.4.4 Phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs are made up from a **verbal noun** (especially in - *ung*) and **a verb** which no longer has its full meaning. **Many phrasal verbs have the sense of a passive**, especially those which include *erfahren*, *erhalten*, *finden*, *gehen*, *gelangen*, *kommen* or *stehen*:

eine große Vereinfachung erfahren (= sehr vereinfacht werden)	*be greatly simplified*
seine Vollendung finden (= vollendet werden)	be completed
in Vergessenheit geraten (= vergessen werden)	be forgotten
zur Anwendung kommen (= angewendet werden)	be used
Unsere Arbeit hat **Anerkennung gefunden**	Our work was appreciated
	The wish was fulfilled
	The play was performed
	This question is being discussed

Der Wunsch **ging in Erfüllung**	
Das Stück **gelangte/kam zur Aufführung**	
Diese Frage **steht zur Diskussion**	

Phrasal verbs like these are very characteristic of modern written non-literary German. They have been criticized by stylists as verbose, but they make it possible to express nuances lacking in the simple verb.

For example, *Das Stück gelangte zur Aufführung* emphasizes the start of the action, whilst *Das Stück wurde aufgeführt* simply records that the action took place.

13.4.5 *zu* + infinitive

The **infinitive with *zu*** with some **auxiliary** and **semi-auxiliary verbs** has the force of a passive. This has been called the 'modal infinitive' construction, and further details are given in **11.2.4**.

Depending on the verb, these constructions can express possibility, obligation or necessity, i.e. have the sense of *können*, *müssen* or *sollen* followed by a passive infinitive. The following verbs occur in this construction:

(a) *sein*: the construction has the sense of *können*, *müssen* or *sollen*

The English construction with 'be to' has a very similar meaning:

Die Anträge **sind** im Rathaus **abzuholen** (= Die Anträge können/müssen im Rathaus abgeholt werden)	*The applications may/can/must be collected from the town hall/are to be collected from the town hall*
Diese Frage **ist** noch **zu erörtern** (= Diese Frage muss/soll noch erörtert werden	This question must still be discussed/is still to be discussed *This text must be translated by tomorrow/This text is to be*

Dieser Text **ist** bis morgen **zu übersetzen** (= Dieser Text muss/ soll bis morgen übersetzt werden)	*translated by tomorrow*

This construction can be turned into an extended adjective using a present participle, e.g. *diese noch zu erörternde Frage* (see **11.5.1e**).

(b) *bleiben*: the construction has the sense of *müssen*

Vieles **bleibt** noch **zu erledigen** (= Vieles muss noch erledigt werden)	*Much still remains to be done*

(c) *gehen*: the construction has the sense of *können*

Das Bild **geht** nicht **zu befestigen** (= Das Bild kann nicht befestigt werden)	*The picture cannot be secured*

This construction is colloquial and not accepted as standard.

(d) *stehen*: the construction has the sense of *müssen*

It is only used impersonally, with a limited number of verbs, principally *befürchten* and *erwarten*:

Es **steht zu befürchten**, dass sich diese Vorfälle häufen (= Es muss befürchtet werden, dass sich diese Vorfälle häufen)	*It is to be feared that these incidents will occur increasingly*

(e) *es gibt*: the construction has the sense of *müssen*

Es **gibt** noch vieles **zu tun** (= Vieles muss noch getan werden)	*There's still a lot to be done*

13.4.6 *sich lassen*

***sich lassen* with a following infinitive can have the force of a passive**. It expresses possibility and thus means much the same as using *können* with a passive infinitive. This construction is very frequent with transitive verbs in all registers:

Das **lässt sich** aber erklären (= Das kann aber erklärt werden)	*But that can be explained*
Das Problem **lässt sich** leicht lösen (= Das Problem kann leicht gelöst werden)	The problem can be solved easily
Das **ließe sich** aber ändern (= Das könnte geändert werden)	That might be altered, though
Ein Ende **lässt sich** nicht absehen	*There is no end in sight*

This construction can be used impersonally with transitive or intransitive verbs. The impersonal subject *es* can be omitted if it is not in initial position in a main clause, see **3.6.2**:

Es **lässt sich** dort gut **leben**	*It's a good life there*
Darüber **lässt** (es) **sich streiten**	*We can argue about that*

In general, this construction is only possible if the subject is a thing rather than a person. Reflexive *lassen* with a person as subject usually has the sense of 'cause' or 'permit', see **11.3.1c**.

13.4.7 *gehören*

***gehören* with a past participle has passive force** and the sense of obligation or necessity. This construction is mainly found in spoken South German:

Dieser Kerl **gehört eingesperrt** (= Dieser Kerl sollte eingesperrt werden)	*That guy needs locking up*
Dem **gehört** das deutlich **gesagt** (=	*He ought to be told that clearly*

Ihm sollte das deutlich gesagt werden)

13.4.8 Adjectives in *-bar*

Adjectives in - *bar* **from verbs can be used with *sein*** to express a possibility with a passive sense. They correspond to English adjectives in '-able'/'-ible', see **20.3.1a**:

Diese Muscheln sind nicht **essbar** (= Diese Muscheln können nicht gegessen werden)	*These shellfish are not edible/ cannot be eaten*
Das Argument ist nicht **widerlegbar** (= Das Argument kann nicht widerlegt werden)	The argument is irrefutable/cannot be refuted
Man ist einfach **unerreichbar** (*Frisch*)	*One simply cannot be reached*

Adjectives with the suffixes - ***lich*** (from some verbs, see **20.3.1f**) or - *fähi* ***g*** (from some verbal nouns) have similar force:

Seine Antwort war **unverständlich** (= Seine Antwort konnte nicht verstanden werden)	*His answer was incomprehensible/ could not be understood*
Dieser Apparat ist nicht weiter **entwicklungsfähig** (= Dieser Apparat kann nicht weiter entwickelt werden)	*This apparatus cannot be developed further*

Mood: the imperative and the subjunctive

The grammatical category of MOOD makes it possible for speakers to signal their attitude to what they are saying, in particular to indicate whether what they are saying is to be understood as a fact, a possibility or a command.

German has three moods, the INDICATIVE, the IMPERATIVE and the SUBJUNCTIVE, and these are shown by special verb endings or forms. Table 14.1 shows some typical examples of verb forms in the three moods.

Table 14.1 The moods of German

Indicative	Subjunctive	Imperative
sie **ist**	sie **sei**	**sei!**
sie **kauft**	sie **kaufe**	**kaufe!**
sie **kam**	sie **käme**	**kommt!**
sie **wird wandern**	sie **würde wandern**	**wandern Sie!**

All the **forms** of the **indicative** and the **imperative** in the **active** voice are given in Tables 10.10–10.13, and in the **passive** in Tables 10.14 and 10.15. The formation of the **subjunctiv** e mood is explained in section **10.5** and all the forms are shown in Tables 10.16 – 10.22.

- The INDICATIVE mood presents what the speaker is saying as a fact

The **indicative** is the most frequent mood, used in **all kinds of**

statements and in **questions** – in effect in all contexts where speakers do not want to give a command or to signal that what they are saying may not be the fact. As it is the 'normal' or default mood, its use is not treated specifically in this chapter.

- The IMPERATIVE mood is used in commands and requests

As we normally address these to the person we are talking to, the **imperative** mood only has special forms in the **second person** (i.e. the 'you'-form). The uses of the imperative in German are treated in section **14.1**, together with the other ways of giving commands and requests.

- The SUBJUNCTIVE mood presents what the speaker is saying as not necessarily true

If we use the **subjunctive**, we are characterizing an activity, an event or a state as **unreal**, **possible** or, at best, **not necessarily true** (hence its old German name of *Möglichkeitsform*). English has few distinct subjunctive forms, and these often sound archaic or artificial even in formal registers, but the subjunctive is still widely used in all registers in German, in particular to **signal a possibility** and in **indirect speech**. Full information is given in the following sections, which cover:

- The **forms and tenses** of the subjunctive (section **14.2**)
- The subjunctive in **conditional sentences** (section **14.3**)
- The use of the subjunctive in **indirect speech** (section **14.4**)
- **Other uses** of the subjunctive (section **14.5**)

14.1 Commands and the imperative

14.1.1 The imperative mood

The most frequent means of expressing commands or requests in German is by using the imperative mood. This only has special forms for **the second person**, i.e. the person to whom the request or

command is being directed. These forms are given in **Tables 10.10** and **10.11**:

Kevin, **sei** doch nicht so dumm!

Angelika, **stell** (e) dich nicht so an!

Kinder, **bringt** mal die Stühle zu uns in den Garten!

Kommen Sie doch bitte herein und **nehmen Sie** Platz, Frau Meier!

In speech the imperative is typically used with the modal particles ***mal*** (see **9.1.22**) and/or ***doch*** (see **9.1.7**). Without one of these, a spoken command may sound insistent or harsh. Other modal particles commonly used with the imperative to alter the tone of a command are ***ja*** (**9.1.19**), ***nur*** (**9.1.25**), ***ruhig*** (**9.1.27**) and ***schon*** (**9.1.29**).

A pronoun is normally only used in the ***Sie*** form of the imperative, but ***du*** or ***ihr*** are occasionally added to the simple imperative forms for emphasis:

Bestell **du** inzwischen das Frühstück! (*Wendt*)	*Meanwhile,* **you** *order breakfast*
Kinder, wir kommen gleich. Geht **ihr** schon vor!	*Children, we're just coming.* **You** *go first.*

14.1.2 Commands and requests in the first and third person

As the imperative only has special forms in the second person, other forms have to be used for commands and requests involving the first or third person.

(a) Commands and requests in the first person plural

In English, these are typically in the form ***Let's do something***. German

has a number of equivalents for this:

(i) using the **first person plural** form of ***Konjunktiv I***, with the verb first:

Seien wir dankbar, dass nichts passiert ist!	*Let's be grateful that nothing happened!*
Na, also, **gehen wir** ganz langsam (*Fallada*)	Well then, let's walk quite slowly
Also, **trinken wir** doch noch ein Glas Wein!	*All right, let's have another glass of wine then!*

Only the verb *sein* shows that it is the subjunctive which is being used in this construction, as this is the only verb with a distinctive first person plural *Konjunktiv I* form.

(ii) using the **imperative** of ***lassen***. This construction is rather formal:

Lass uns jetzt ganz langsam gehen!	**Lasst uns** dankbar sein!
Lassen Sie uns doch noch ein Glas Wein trinken!	

(iii) using the modal auxiliary ***wollen***:

Wir wollen doch noch ein Glas Wein trinken, oder?

Questions with *wollen*, e.g. *Wollen wir jetzt nach Hause gehen?* have the force of a suggestion, rather like English 'Shall we… ?' (see **15.7.1b**).

(b) Commands and requests in the third person

These can be used to **ask someone else** to tell a third person to do something, as in English ***Let/Have her come in***, or when issuing general instructions to anyone concerned.

(i) Third person commands are most often expressed with ***sollen***, see **15.6.1b**:

Er **soll** hereinkommen	*Let him come in/Tell him to come in*
Sie **sollen** draußen bleiben	Tell them to stay outside
Man **soll** hier nicht parken	*There's no parking here*

(ii) ***Konjunktiv I*** can be used in third person commands (see **14.5.6d**):

Es **sage** uns niemand, es gebe keine Alternative mehr (*Augstein*)	*Let nobody tell us that there is no longer any alternative*
Er **komme** sofort	*Let him come at once*

A generalized command or instruction (i.e. 'to whom it may concern') can be expressed by using ***Konjunktiv I*** with the pronoun ***man***:

Man **schlage** 4 Eiweiß zu steifem Schnee	*Beat 4 egg whites until stiff*

These constructions with *Konjunktiv I* now sound a little old-fashioned. ***sollen*** is preferred for third person commands, and the **infinitive** for generalized commands and instructions (see **14.1.3a**).

(iii) In formal registers ***Konjunktiv I*** of the modal auxiliary ***mögen*** can be used to express a command or instruction to a third person (see **15.4.4**), e.g.:

Er **möge** sofort kommen	*He should come in at once*
Wer weiß, wo sich Hans Mayer aufhält, **möge** sich umgehend mit dem Gendarmerieposten Liezen in Verbindung setzen (*KlZ*)	*Anybody who has knowledge of Hans Mayer's whereabouts should get in touch immediately with the police station in Liezen*

14.1.3 Other ways of expressing commands and requests

Apart from the imperative mood, some other constructions can be used to express commands, requests, instructions and the like.

(a) The infinitive is often used in official commands and instructions

(See also **11.3.3a**.) Using the infinitive makes the command sound more general and less directed at a particular person or group:

Nicht r **auchen** ! Bitte **anschnallen** !	*No smoking. Fasten seat belts*
Erst **gurten**, dann **starten**	*Fasten your safety belt before setting off* (official advice to motorists)
Bitte **einsteigen!**	*Please get in* (railway announcement)
4 Eiweiß zu sehr steifem Schnee **schlagen**	*Beat 4 egg whites until stiff* (cooking instruction)

With reflexive verbs, the reflexive pronoun is omitted, e.g. *Nicht* **hinauslehnen** *!* (from ***sich*** *hinauslehnen* 'lean out').

(b) The past participle is sometimes used for depersonalized commands

In practice, this construction is limited to idiomatic usage with a small number of verbs (see also **11.5.3a**):

Abgemacht!	*Agreed!*
Aufgepasst!	Look out!
Stillgestanden!	*Attention!* (military command)

(c) The subjectless passive can have the force of a command

See also **13.1.4d**. The speaker can include him/herself in the instruction:

Jetzt wird gearbeitet!	*Let's get down to work now*
Hier wird nicht geraucht!	*No smoking here!*

(d) Statements or questions in the present or future can serve as commands

i.e. by being given the characteristic intonation of a command, as in English. These always sound more blunt than the simple imperative. In this way, any of the following could be used for English 'Are you going to listen now?!' or 'You're going to listen now!':

Hörst du jetzt zu?!	Du hörst jetzt zu!
Wirst du jetzt zuhören?!	Du wirst jetzt zuhören!

(e) The modal auxiliary *sollen* can be used with the force of a command

This usage is linked to the basic meaning of *sollen*, which expresses obligation, see **15.6.1b**:

Du **sollst** das Fenster zumachen	*(I want you to) shut the window*
Sie **sollen** ihr sofort schreiben	*(You should) write to her at once*

sollen is often used to repeat a command to someone who appears not to have heard the first time: *Du* **sollst** *sofort nach Hause kommen!* Commands in indirect speech are also most often given with *sollen*, e.g. *Sie sagte ihm, dass er sie am Dienstag anrufen* **sollte** 'She told him to call her on Tuesday'. For the use of *sollen* in third person commands see **14.1.2b**.

(f) A *dass*-clause in isolation can be used as a command

These are emotive in tone and are usually accompanied by the particle *ja* (see **9.1.19**) and/or an 'ethic' dative (see **2.5.2d**):

Dass du **mir (ja)** gut aufpasst!	*Be careful for my sake*
Dass ihr **ja** der Mutter nichts davon erzählt!	*Just don't tell your mother anything about it*

14.2 The subjunctive: forms and uses

Although the SUBJUNCTIVE is widely used in modern German, some forms and uses are nowadays restricted to formal registers, while others have become obsolete. Even educated native speakers are often uncertain and insecure about what constitutes 'good' or 'correct' usage, and there is often a gulf between what people think they **ought** to say or write and what they actually **do** say or write.

Few other aspects of German grammar have attracted so much attention from self-appointed guardians of the language and sundry pedants, and information in German grammar books and even teaching manuals for foreign learners is often at variance with actual usage. This does not make it easy to describe modern usage clearly for the English-speaking learner, but the following sections attempt to set out as clearly and accurately as possible how the subjunctive is actually used in modern German, concentrating on those usages which are most likely to be encountered in practice or needed when speaking and writing German.

14.2.1 The forms of the subjunctive: *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II*

Table 14.2 The forms of *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II*

Konjunktiv I	**present subjunctive**	es gebe
	perfect subjunctive	es habe gegeben
	future subjunctive	es werde geben

Konjunktiv II	**past subjunctive**	es gäbe
	pluperfect subjunctive	es hätte gegeben
	conditional	es würde geben

The forms of the subjunctive are traditionally referred to by the names of the tenses, e.g. **present subjunctive** (*es gebe*), **past subjunctive** (*es gäbe*), **perfect subjunctive** (*es habe gegeben*), etc. Detailed information on these forms is given in section **10.5** and **Tables 10.16 – 10.22**.

Despite the traditional names, the six forms of the subjunctive do not correspond to time differences in the same way as the tenses of the indicative, and these traditional terms are misleading. Many modern German grammars group the subjunctive forms into two sets which they call ***Konjunktiv I*** and ***Konjunktiv II*** as set out in **Table 14.2**, and these terms will be adopted here since they make it easier to explain how the subjunctive is used in German.

14.2.2 The uses of *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II*

(a) *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II* have distinct uses

These have **nothing to do with time or tense**, and the so-called 'present subjunctive' and 'past subjunctive' can both refer to the present, as the following examples show:

Gisela sagt ihrer Mutter, sie **komme** um sechs in Berlin an	*Gisela is telling her mother that she is arriving in Berlin at six*
Wenn ich es jetzt **wüsste**, **könnte** ich es dir sagen	*If I knew it now, I would be able to tell you*

The main use of the present subjunctive and all *Konjunktiv I* forms is to mark indirect speech, see **14.4**.

The main use of the past subjunctive and all *Konjunktiv II* forms is to indicate an unreal condition or a possibility, see **14.3**.

(b) Indicating time differences in the subjunctive

The difference between **present and past time** is expressed in *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II* by using the '**perfect**' or '**pluperfect**' **subjunctives**:

(i) The **perfect subjunctive** functions as the past tense of ***Konjunktiv I***:

Gisela sagt ihrer Mutter, sie **sei** um sechs in Berlin **angekommen**	*Gisela is telling her mother that she arrived in Berlin at six*

(ii) The **pluperfect subjunctive** functions as the past tense of ***Konjunktiv II***:

Wenn ich es damals **gewusst hätte**, **hätte** ich es dir sagen **können**	*If I had known it then, I would have been able to tell you*

14.2.3 *Konjunktiv II* and *würde*

Konjunktiv II has **three forms** as illustrated in **Table 14.3**.

Table 14.3 The forms of *Konjunktiv II*

Past subjunctive	Pluperfect subjunctive	Conditional
ich hätte	ich hätte gehabt	ich würde haben
ich wäre	ich wäre gewesen	ich würde sein
ich käme	ich wäre gekommen	ich würde kommen
ich schliefe	ich hätte geschlafen	ich würde schlafen
ich machte	ich hätte gemacht	ich würde machen

As explained in **14.2.2**, the '**past subjunctive**' typically refers to **present time**, and the '**pluperfect subjunctive**' to the **past**. The **conditional with *würde*** can be used as a '**future-in-the-past**' (see **(c)** below), but it most often occurs as a **substitute for the past**

subjunctive, as explained below.

(a) The conditional form with *würde* often replaces the simple past subjunctive

The conditional form is often used instead of the simple past subjunctive, in exactly the same meanings and contexts, so that people say or write *ich würde schlafen* rather than *ich schliefe*.

Which one is used depends on **the individual verb** involved and on **register**. The use of the simple forms is still often encouraged by German school teachers and traditionalists as a mark of good style, but in practice they often sound stilted or archaic, and they are avoided. Modern usage is as follows:

> (i) With **weak verbs** the simple form is only used if the subjunctive meaning is otherwise clear from the context. This is because their past subjunctive form is exactly the same as the past indicative:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Wenn sie das Fenster **aufmachte**, **hätten** wir frische Luft im Zimmer | *If she opened the window, we would have some fresh air in the room* |

Although *aufmachte* could be ambiguous (in isolation we would have no way of knowing whether it is indicative or subjunctive), the **clear *Konjunktiv II* form *hätte*** in the other half of the sentence makes it clear that the whole sentence is to be understood as expressing possibility.

However, the past subjunctive forms of weak verbs are in practice never used in spoken German, which will always prefer the conditional:

> Wenn sie das Fenster **aufmachen würde**, hätten wir frische Luft im Zimmer

In fact, the simple past subjunctive of weak verbs is nowadays unusual even in writing, and if the subjunctive meaning is not clear from the

context, the conditional must be used:

Bei der Hitze **würde** ich das Fenster **aufmachen**	*With this heat I would open the window*

(ii) With **common irregular verbs** only the past subjunctive form is usual.

This applies in particular to ***sein***, ***haben***, ***werden*** and the **modal auxiliaries**. With these, the simple forms ***wäre***, ***hätte***, ***würde***, ***könnte***, ***müsste***, etc. **are preferred** in both spoken and written German. The conditional forms *würde sein*, *würde haben*, etc. are unusual in any register, unless there is a sense of 'future-in-the-past'.

(iii) The past subjunctive forms of a few other **common strong** or **irregular verbs** are quite frequent. In particular, the past subjunctive forms and conditional of the following verbs are roughly equally frequent in written German:

finden **fände** halten **hielte** lassen **ließe** tun **täte**

geben **gäbe** heißen **hieße** sprechen **spräche** wissen **wüsste**

gehen **ginge** kommen **käme** stehen **stünde**

käme, ***täte*** and ***wüsste*** are also not unusual in spoken German, as well as in writing, and the simple forms of the other verbs in this group are sometimes heard in speech, too.

(iv) The past subjunctive forms of the **other strong or irregular** verbs are not often used. They only occur nowadays in formal registers, and even there they are less common than the conditional forms, so that, for example, *sie würde schlafen* or *sie würde hier sitzen* are more frequent than *sie schliefe* or *sie säße hier*. In practice, despite the efforts of generations of schoolteachers and linguistic purists, the past subjunctive forms of many less common strong verbs, in particular most of the irregular ones and those in *-ö-* and *-ü-* (e.g. *begönne*, *flösse*,

verdürbe), are felt to be impossibly stilted and even comical. Many Germans do not even know the forms, and they are generally avoided even in writing. **The forms which are no longer used in practice are given in italics in Table 10.23.**

(b) The pluperfect of *Konjunktiv II* forms with *würde ... haben/sein* are infrequent

The pluperfect subjunctive is composed of *hätte* or *wäre* (depending on whether the verb forms its perfect tenses with *haben* or *sein*) together with the past participle:

Ich **hätte geschlafen**	*I would have slept*
Ich **wäre gekommen**	*I would have come*

Longer forms, e.g. *ich würde geschlafen haben* or *ich würde gekommen sein* are occasionally seen or heard, but they are much less common than the shorter forms with *hätte* or *wäre*, especially in writing.

(c) The conditional is often used in the sense of a future-in-the-past

i.e. where the speaker or writer is looking forward within a narrative in the past tense, e.g.:

Er wusste viel besser als Chénier, dass er keine Eingebung **haben würde**; er hatte nämlich noch nie eine gehabt (*Süßkind*)	*He knew much better than Chénier that he would not have an inspiration, because he had never had one*
Ich beschloss, sobald ich groß **sein würde**, Spengler zu lesen (*Dönhoff*)	I decided I would read Spengler as soon as I was grown up
Ich war sicher, dass ich den Job nicht **kriegen würde**	*I was sure I wouldn't get the job*

The simple past subjunctive is hardly ever used in contexts of this type.

14.3 Conditional sentences

Typical CONDITIONAL SENTENCES consist of a subordinate clause, introduced by the conjunction ***wenn*** (= English 'if'), expressing a condition, and a main clause, expressing the consequence, as shown in **Table 14.4**:

Table 14.4 Conditional sentences

Condition	Consequence
Wenn du den Wein kaufst, *If you buy the wine*	mache ich das Abendessen *I will cook dinner*
Wenn ich genug Zeit hätte, *If I had enough time*	käme ich gern mit *I would gladly come with you*
Wenn sie mich fragen würde, *If she asked me*	würde ich ihr alles sagen *I would tell her everything*
Wenn ich gewonnen hätte, *If I had won*	wäre ich nach Amerika gefahren *I would have gone to America*

We can distinguish '**open' conditional sentences**, where there is a real possibility of the condition being met, and '**remote' conditional sentences**, where this possibility is at best a remote one. Compare:

Open: Wenn Anna da **ist**, **kann** sie gern mitkommen

Remote: Wenn Anna da **wäre**, **könnte** sie gern mitkommen

German typically uses the **indicative** in '**open' conditional sentences** (see **14.3.2**), but ***Konjunktiv II*** in '**remote' conditional sentences** (see **14.3.1**).

14.3.1 *Konjunktiv II* in remote conditional sentences

(a) Remote conditional sentences in the present

The past subjunctive or conditional form of *Konjunktiv II* is used to express an **unreal condition** in the present:

Wenn wir Zeit **hätten**, **könnten** wir einen Ausflug machen	*If we had time, we would be able to go on an excursion*
Die Europäer **wären** erleichtert, wenn England wieder **austreten würde** (*Zeit*)	The Europeans would be relieved if England pulled out again
Wenn ich 200 000 Euro im Lotto **gewinnen würde**, **würde** ich eine Villa auf Teneriffa **kaufen**	*If I won 200,000 euros in the lottery I would buy a villa on Tenerife*

Konjunktiv II is used in **both the *wenn* -clause and the main clause** in German. This contrasts with English, which typically uses the past tense in the 'if'-clause, and the conditional (with 'would') in the main clause. Either the past subjunctive or the conditional can be used in German in either clause, with the choice depending on register and the individual verb involved, as explained in **14.2.3a**.

Grammarians and schoolteachers have long argued that the conditional with *würde* should only be used in the main clause, or that sentences with two conditionals should be avoided as they are clumsy. However, these prescriptions are widely ignored in both spoken and written German, especially if the simple *Konjunktiv II* forms of the verbs involved are obsolete or not used, as in the last example above and the following:

Die Telefonleitungen sind ohnehin sehr schlecht, also **würde** es kaum etwas ausmachen, wenn auch sie zerstört werden **würden** (*SZ*)	*The telephone cables are very bad anyway, so it would hardly make any difference if they were destroyed as well*

Nevertheless, the most common pattern in conditional sentences is with a simple *Konjunktiv II* form in the *wenn* -clause and a conditional with *würd e* in the main clause:

Ich **würde** den schönen Top **kaufen**, wenn ich genug Geld **hätte**	*I would buy that nice top if I had enough money*

(b) Remote conditional sentences in the past

Conditional sentences with the **pluperfect subjunctive** express a **hypothetical possibility in the past** – something which typically did not come about. The **pluperfect subjunctive** is used in **both** the *wenn* - clause and the main clause:

Wenn ich es nicht mit eigenen Augen **gesehen hätte**, **hätte** ich es nicht **geglaubt**	*If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it*
Wenn mich jener Anruf nicht mehr **erreicht hätte**, **wären** wir einander nie **begegnet** (*Frisch*)	If that call hadn't managed to reach me, we would never have met
Es **wäre** besser für mich **gewesen**, wenn ich **hätte** absagen **können** (*Böll*)	*It would have been better for me if I had been able to refuse*

(c) Time differences between the clauses in conditional sentences

If there is a difference in time between the main clause and the *wenn*-clause, this can be indicated by using the **past subjunctive/conditional** forms or the **pluperfect** forms as appropriate:

Wäre Sarkozy schon im ersten Wahlgang **gewählt worden**, **würde** die französische Bevölkerung schon jetzt das Datum **kennen**	*If Sarkozy had already been elected in the first ballot the French people would already know the date*
Ich **säße** hier nicht auf demselben Stuhl, wenn wir bisher diesen Punkt nicht **erreicht hätten** (*Zeit*)	*I wouldn't be sitting here in the same chair if we hadn't already reached this point*

(d) Other auxiliary verbs used in remote conditional sentences

(i) The *Konjunktiv II* of ***sollen*** is often used in the *wenn-* clause. This normally points to the future, and the meaning is similar to using 'should' or 'were to' in English:

Wenn sie mich **fragen sollte**, würde ich ihr alles sagen	*If she were to ask me, I would tell her everything*
Er hält sich bereit, aus der Bodenluke zu springen, wenn sich nachts ein Auto der Sägemühle **nähern sollte** (*Strittmatter*)	*He is ready to jump out of the skylight if a car should approach the sawmill at night*

(ii) The *Konjunktiv II* of ***wollen*** is frequently used in the *wenn-*clause, often with only a faint suggestion of its basic meaning of 'want', 'intend':

Wenn du schneller **arbeiten wolltest**, könntest du mehr verdienen	*If you worked a bit faster you could earn more*
Wie wäre es, wenn wir ihr **helfen wollten** ?	*What about us helping her?*

wollen is particularly common in formal registers if *wenn* is omitted (see **14.3.3a**):

Es würde uns zu lange aufhalten, **wollten wir** alle diese Probleme ausführlich behandeln	*It would detain us too long if we were to treat all these problems in detail*

(iii) The ***Konjunktiv II*** of ***tun*** (i.e. **täte**) is common in colloquial speech instead of *würd e*, especially in the South, see **11.3.1d**. This is generally considered to be a non-standard regionalism, although it is very widespread:

Wenn ich jetzt **losfahren täte**, so könnte ich schon vor zwölf in Augsburg sein	*If I set off now, I could be in Augsburg as early as twelve*

14.3.2 Open conditional sentences

The **indicative** is used in conditional sentences which express 'open' conditions, i.e. where there is a real possibility of the conditions being met. These correspond to conditional sentences without 'would' in English. In English, the future tense is the norm in the main clause of such sentences, but in German the present is at least as frequent, see **12.1.3**:

Wenn sie immer noch krank **ist**, **muss** ich morgen allein kommen	*If she's still ill, I'll have to come on my own tomorrow*
Wenn ich ihr jetzt **schreibe**, **bekommt** sie den Brief morgen	If I write to her now, she'll get the letter tomorrow
Wenn wir jetzt **losfahren**, **werden** wir schon vor zwölf in Augsburg **sein**	*If we set off now, we'll be in Augsburg by twelve*

If one half of a conditional sentence is seen as hypothetical, but the other as factual, the first can be in the subjunctive and the second in the indicative:

Was **würdet** ihr **tun**, wenn ihr **mitbekommt**, dass euer Freund mit anderen Frauen **simst** ?	*What would you do if you find out that your boyfriend has been texting other women?*

With the past tense, the sense is usually that the conditions have been met, and *wenn* is typically very close to the meaning 'whenever', see **17.3.1e**:

Wenn meine Eltern mir Geld **schickten**, **kaufte** ich mir sofort etwas zum Anziehen	*If/Whenever my parents sent me money I immediately bought something to wear*

14.3.3 Other forms of conditional sentences

A typical conditional sentence has a *wenn* -clause and a main clause, as shown in **Table 14.4**, but there are a number of possible variations on

this pattern.

(a) The conjunction *wenn* can be omitted

In this case the subordinate clause begins with the verb:

Hätte ich Zeit, käme ich gern mit	*If I had time, I should like to come with you*
Ist sie krank, muss er morgen allein kommen	If she's ill, he'll have to come on his own tomorrow
Sollte ich nach Berlin kommen, würde ich sie sicher besuchen	*If I should get to Berlin I'd be sure to visit her*

This construction can be compared to the similar, rather old-fashioned English construction, e.g. '**Had** I time, …'. As a general rule, it is more typical of formal writing, although sentences with *sollte*, in particular, are not unusual in the spoken language, and it is often used in legal or quasi-legal contexts. Occasionally, the main clause comes first:

Das Bild wäre unvollständig, **würden** nicht die vielen Gruppen erwähnt, die den Einwanderern das Leben leichter machen (*FR*)	*The picture would be incomplete if the many groups were not mentioned who make life easier for the immigrants*

(b) Using *so* or *dann* in a following main clause

If the *wenn* -clause comes first in the sentence, it can be picked up by *so* or *dann* at the start of the main clause. This so-called 'correlating' *so* or *dann* is optional, but quite common:

Wenn ich Zeit hätte, (**so** / **dann**) käme ich gern mit

Wenn ich ihr heute schreibe, (**so** / **dann**) bekommt sie den Brief morgen

However, it is very frequently used if *wenn* is omitted (see **(a)** above):

Hätte ich Zeit, (**so**) käme ich gern mit

Ist sie krank, (**so**) muss ich morgen allein kommen

Sollte ich nach Berlin kommen, (**so**) würde ich sie sicher besuchen

(c) The condition may appear in another form

i.e. not in a *wenn* -clause but in an adverbial or another kind of clause. *Konjunktiv II* indicates a remote possibility, or, with a pluperfect subjunctive, something which might have happened, but didn't:

Dieser Unbekannte würde mich **wahrscheinlich** besser verstehen (*Böll*)	*This stranger would probably understand me better*
Ohne die Notlandung in Tamaulipas wäre alles anders gekommen (*Frisch*)	But for the emergency landing in Tamaulipas everything would have turned out differently
Wer diese Entwicklung vorausgesehen hätte, hätte viel Geld verdienen können	*Anyone foreseeing this development would have been able to make a lot of money*

In some sentences the condition is implicit:

Lieber **bliebe** ich zu Hause (i.e. an deiner Stelle)	*I would rather stay at home*
Ich **hätte** dasselbe **getan** (i.e. wenn ich die Wahl gehabt hätte)	*I would have done the same*

(d) Other conjunctions used in conditional sentences

wenn is the predominant conjunction in conditional sentences, but there are other possibilities:

(i) ***falls*** 'if' unambiguously introduces a condition.

wenn can also mean 'when(ever)' (see **17.3.1e**), and *falls* can be useful to make the sense clear in contexts where a misunderstanding could be possible. A sentence like:

Wenn ich nach Berlin komme, besuche ich sie

could mean 'When(ever) I get to Berlin I visit her' **or** 'If I get to Berlin I shall visit her'. But ***Falls*** *ich nach Berlin komme, besuche ich sie* can only mean 'If I get to Berlin I shall visit her'.

falls most often introduces 'open' conditions, with the indicative (see **14.3.2**), but it does occasionally occur with *Konjunktiv II*, and it is particularly frequent with *sollte*:

Sie kann niemanden ins Oberhaus befördern lassen, **falls** er einen unsicheren Wahlkreis vertritt (*FAZ*)	*She can't elevate anybody into the Upper House if he doesn't have a safe seat*
Falls diese Hinweise zuträfen, wäre das eine eindeutige Verletzung der Abmachungen (*MM*)	If these indications were correct, that would be a clear infringement of the agreements
Man hielt eine Ratskonferenz für denkbar, jedoch nur, **falls** Frankreich dem Haushalt die Zustimmung verweigern sollte (*FAZ*)	*A meeting of the Council was considered conceivable, but only if France should refuse to give its consent to the budget*

(ii) ***angenommen, dass*** … and ***vorausgesetzt, dass*** … 'assuming that', 'provided that' mainly introduce open conditions.

Angenommen, dass er den Brief erhalten hat, wird er bald hier sein	*Assuming he got the letter, he'll be here soon*
Vorausgesetzt, dass nichts dazwischen kommt, ziehen wir im Frühjahr nach Graz um	*Provided that all goes well, we'll be moving to Graz in the spring*

The conjunction *dass* can be omitted, and the following clause then has

the word order of a main clause, e.g. ***Angenommen** , er hat den Brief erhalten, wird er bald hier sein.*

(iii) ***sofern*** can be used in the sense of 'if', 'provided that' or 'as long as' in open conditions:

Sofern es die Witterungsbedingungen erlauben, findet die Aufführung im Freien vor der alten Abtei statt	*If weather conditions permit, the performance will take place in the open air in front of the old abbey*

(iv) ***selbst wenn***, ***auch wenn***, ***sogar wenn***, ***wenn … auch*** all correspond to English 'even if'. For example, the German equivalent of 'Even if she were to call today, she wouldn't get any tickets', could be any of the following:

Selbst wenn sie heute anrufen sollte, **Auch wenn** sie heute anrufen sollte, **Sogar wenn** sie heute anrufen sollte, **Wenn** sie **auch** heute anrufen sollte,	}	würde sie keine Karten bekommen

(v) ***es sei denn, (dass)*** … 'unless' is mainly used in 'open' conditions. The conjunction *dass* can be omitted, and the following clause then has the word order of a main clause:

Ich komme um zwei, **es sei denn**, ich werde aufgehalten/ dass ich aufgehalten werde	*I'll come at two, unless I'm held up*

In older literary styles ***denn*** on its own can have this meaning:

„Ich lasse dich nicht fort", rief sie, „du sagst mir **denn**, was du im Sinn hast" (*Wiechert*)	'*I shan't let you go', she cried, 'unless you tell me what you have in mind'*

(vi) ***wenn … nicht*** is the usual equivalent of English 'unless' as well as 'if … not'. It is used with open or remote conditions, in the latter case with *Konjunktiv II*:

Wenn er **nicht** bald kommt, wird es zu spät sein	*Unless he comes soon/If he doesn't come soon, it will be too late*
Er hätte es nicht gesagt, **wenn** er **nicht** schuldig wäre	He wouldn't have said it unless he was guilty
Du brauchst die Suppe nicht zu essen, **wenn** du sie wirklich **nicht** magst	*You needn't eat the soup if you really don't like it*

14.4 Indirect speech

14.4.1 Indirect and direct speech

(a) Indirect speech

In INDIRECT SPEECH we report what someone said by putting it into a sentence of our own. This is sometimes called 'reported speech'.

In DIRECT SPEECH, on the other hand, we quote exactly what someone said in the original spoken form (using inverted commas in writing). Compare the following English examples:

Direct speech:	She said, '**I am writing a letter**'
Indirect speech:	She said **that she was writing a letter**

There are marked differences in English between direct and indirect speech. In particular, we put what was said in a **subordinate clause** of its own (typically introduced by 'that'), the **pronoun** can be altered (especially from the first person to the third person) and the **tense is shifted** to the past.

(b) In German indirect speech can be indicated by using *Konjunktiv I*

Konjunktiv I is used, rather than shifting the tense as in English:

Direct speech:	Sie sagte: **„Ich schreibe einen Brief“**
Indirect speech:	Sie sagte, **dass sie einen Brief schreibe**

This is the most important use of *Konjunktiv I* in modern German – so much so that ***Konjunktiv I* on its own is often enough to indicate indirect speech**.

However, **the use of *Konjunktiv I* to mark indirect speech varies considerably**. It is much less often used in informal registers, and there is considerable uncertainty among native speakers in respect of correct usage.

The conjunction *dass*, like English ‘that’, can be left out after the verb of saying, see **17.2.1b**. In this case, the following clause has the order of a main clause, with the verb in second place (see **19.1.1a**), e.g. *Sie sagte, sie* **schreibe** *einen Brief.*

14.4.2 The use of the subjunctive to mark indirect speech

The **accepted standard use of the subjunctive in indirect speech**, as prescribed in all modern grammars of German for written registers, is illustrated with examples in **Table 14.5** and summarized in the rules given in the rest of this section.

Table 14.5 Standard rules for the use of the subjunctive in indirect speech

Rule	Original tense	Direct speech	Indirect speech
Rule 1 Use *Konjunktiv I*	**present** **past**	„Sie weiß es” *‘She knows it’*	Er sagte, sie wisse es

in indirect speech, keeping the same tense as in the original direct speech	**perfect** **future**	„Sie wusste es” *‘She knew it’* „Sie hat es gewusst” *‘She knew/has known it’* „Sie wird es wissen” *‘She will know it’*	*He said she knew it* Er sagte, sie habe es gewusst *He said she had known it* Er sagte, sie habe es gewusst *He said she had known it* Er sagte, sie werde es wissen *He said she would know it*
Rule 2 If the *Konjunktiv I* form is the same as the indicative, use *Konjunktiv II*	**present** **past** **perfect** **future**	„Sie wissen es” *‘They know it’* „Sie wussten es” *‘They knew it’* „Sie haben es gewusst” *‘They knew/have known it’* „Sie werden es wissen” *‘They will know it’*	Er sagte, sie wüssten es *He said they knew it* Er sagte, sie hätten es gewusst *He said they had known it* Er sagte, sie hätten es gewusst *He said they had known it* Er sagte, sie würden es wissen *He said they would know it*

(a) RULE 1: *Konjunktiv I* is used to mark indirect speech wherever possible

i.e. as long as the forms of *Konjunktiv I* are clearly distinct from those of the present indicative

(i) In practice, for almost all verbs except *sein*, this is the case only in the **third person singular**, where the ending - *e* of *Konjunktiv I* (e.g. *sie schreib* ***e***) differs from the present indicative ending - *t* (e.g. *sie schreib* ***t***)
(ii) The basic principle is that the same tense of *Konjunktiv I* is used for the indirect speech as was used in the indicative in the original direct speech, as shown in the examples in **Table 14.5**. The only exception to this principle is that **if the original direct speech** was in the **past or the pluperfect** tense, the **perfect subjunctive** is used in indirect speech. In this way the following sentences of direct speech all become *Sie sagte, sie* **habe** *es nicht gewusst* in indirect speech:

„Ich **wusste** es nicht"	„Ich **habe** es nicht **gewusst** "	„Ich **hatte** es nicht **gewusst** "

(iii) Complex pluperfect forms are sometimes used if the original direct speech was in the pluperfect, e.g. *Sie sagte, sie* **habe** *es nicht* ***gewusst gehabt***. Such constructions are not considered standard.
(iv) If the present tense of the original direct speech refers to the future (see **12.2.3**), the future subjunctive is often used in indirect speech, as an alternative to the present subjunctive. In this way, there are two possibilities for converting the following sentence into indirect speech:

„Sie **heiratet** bald"	→	Sie sagte, sie **heirate** bald **or** Sie sagte, sie **werde** bald **heiraten**

(b) RULE 2: If the form of *Konjunktiv I* is the same as the indicative, *Konjunktiv II* is used

The principle underlying this **replacement rule** is that indirect speech should be marked by a distinct subjunctive form if possible. This is typically needed in the third person plural, where only *sein* has a

Konjunktiv I form (*sie seien*) which differs from the form of the present indicative (see **Table 10.17**).

For example, to turn the sentence *„Wir wissen es nicht"* into indirect speech, we cannot use the *Konjunktiv I* form *sie wissen*, because it is not different from the present indicative. It is replaced by the *Konjunktiv II* form: *Sie sagten, sie* **wüssten** *es nicht*. **Table 14.5** gives more examples of the application of this rule for the other tenses.

These standard rules for the use of the subjunctive in indirect speech are adhered to with particular consistency in newspapers. By using *Konjunktiv I* we can indicate that we are simply reporting what someone else said, without committing ourselves to saying whether we think it is true or not. This makes it a handy device for journalists (especially when reporting politicians?!) and newspapers make wide use of it:

Der Bundespressechef verwies darauf, dass in den kommenden Gesprächen noch manches verfeinert werden **könne** (*FAZ*)	*The Federal government press officer pointed out that some things could be refined in future discussions*
M. erklärte, die Bahn **könne** das Betriebsrisiko nicht übernehmen, auch wenn es zusätzliche öffentliche Mittel für den Bau der Strecke **gebe** (*Presse*)	*M. explained that the Federal Railways could not take on the operational risks even if there were additional public funds to build the line*

(c) The subjunctive as the only indicator of indirect speech

***Konjunktiv I* in particular is such a clear marker of indirect speech that it can be used on its own to show that a statement is reported**. This means that German can often dispense with repeated cues like 'He said that …', 'He went on to say that …' which are usually needed in English. Almost any newspaper report will provide examples of how this possibility is exploited:

Der Regierungssprecher bedauerte die Veröffentlichung. Die Dokumente **seien** „auf illegale Art und Weise an die Öffentlichkeit gelangt". Die robusten und festen Beziehungen zu den USA **würden** aber in „keiner Weise" betrübt. Es **gebe** eine in Jahrzehnten gewachsene tiefe Freundschaft, die auf gemeinsamen Werten **beruhe** und durch die Publikation „nicht ernsthaft beschädigt wird". Passagen über deutsche Politiker **hätten** eher das „Niveau des Lästerns". (*SZ*)

Note the **alternation of *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II* forms according to the 'replacement rule'** and that, even in such a sequence of main clauses without any verb of saying the subjunctive on its own is enough to signal indirect speech. Interspersing a few stretches of direct speech in quotation marks, in the indicative, is also very typical in this style of presentation in newspapers.

14.4.3 Other current usage in indirect speech

The standard rules given in 14.4.2 for the use of the subjunctive in indirect speech are in practice only observed at all closely in formal written registers, especially in newspapers and non-fiction. In everyday speech and less formal writing alternative constructions occur regularly, and these are summarized for quick reference in Table 14.6.

Table 14.6 Indirect speech in everyday spoken German

Formal writing: Konjunktiv I	Everyday speech: Indicative or Konjunktiv II
Er sagte, sie **wisse** es	Er hat gesagt, sie **weiß** es Er hat gesagt, sie **wüsste** es
Er sagte, sie **habe** es **gewusst**	Er hat gesagt, sie **hat** es **gewusst** Er hat gesagt, sie **hätte** es **gewusst**

(a) *Konjunktiv II* is used rather than *Konjunktiv I*

i.e. *Konjunktiv II* is used even where a distinct *Konjunktiv I* form is

available. This occurs:

(i) in **everyday speech**:

Sie hat gesagt, sie **käme** heute nicht	*She said she wasn't coming today*
Sie hat gesagt, sie **hätte** es verstanden	She said she had understood it
Sie hat gesagt, sie **würde** den Brief noch heute **schreiben**	*She said she'd get the letter written today*

In spoken German *Konjunktiv II* is an alternative to the indicative (see **(c)** below), and it is often preferred when the main verb is in the past or perfect tense. *Konjunktiv II* also tends to be used if there is a longer stretch of indirect speech covering more than one sentence:

Oliver sagt, er hat eben einen neuen Wagen gekauft. Der **hätte** über 20 000 Euro gekostet und **hätte** eine Klimaanlage	*Oliver says he's just bought a new car. It cost more than 20,000 euros and it's got air-conditioning*

Konjunktiv I can sound rather affected in informal registers and it is rarely used in colloquial German. The only exception is that forms of *sein* are occasionally used in speech, but these often imply that the speaker has doubts. If someone says *Silke hat mir gesagt, sie **sei** heute krank* it often indicates that s/he thinks that Silke might not have been telling the whole truth.

(ii) in **writing**: *Konjunktiv II* is less frequent than *Konjunktiv I*, but it is by no means unknown, especially in fictional or biographical writing:

Sie sagte, ihr Vater **schliefe** erst gegen Morgen richtig ein und **würde** bis neun im Bett **bleiben**, und sie müsse den Laden aufmachen (*Böll*)	*She said that her father didn't get to sleep properly till the morning and he would stay in bed till nine and that she had to open the shop*

Tante Sissi schrieb uns, es gehe Onkel Heinrich nicht gut und sie **säße** oft an seinem Bett (*Dönhoff*)	*Aunt Sissi wrote telling us that Uncle Heinrich wasn't well and she often sat at his bedside*

Prescribed 'standard' usage in the above examples would be *schlafe, bleibe* and *sitze* respectively.

(b) The conditional with *würde* is used rather than the past subjunctive

The use of *würde* in indirect speech as a substitute for the simple past subjunctive is potentially confusing for English speakers, as they might interpret it as having the same meaning as an English conditional with 'would'.

(i) The use of *würde* is frequent in colloquial spoken German, especially since the simple past subjunctive is restricted to a few common verbs (see **14.2.3**):

Er hat gemeint, ich **würde** zu schnell **reden**	*He thought I talked too fast*
Er wirft mir vor, ich **würde** ihm nicht **vertrauen**	*He tells me off, saying I don't trust him*

(ii) In writing the conditional in indirect speech is frowned on by purists, but it is actually quite frequent, most often with those strong verbs whose simple *Konjunktiv II* forms are obsolete, or with weak verbs (see **14.2.3**).

- It can be used for a *Konjunktiv II* required by the 'replacement rule':

Immer häufiger, berichtet Professor N. von der Uni Hamburg, **würden** Studenten abends oder nachts **jobben**.	*Professor N. from the University of Hamburg reports that more and more often students take on casual work*

Tagsüber **seien** sie dann furchtbar erschöpft (*Spiegel*)	*in the evenings or at night. During the day they are then terribly exhausted, he said*
Sieben Leser gaben an, sie **würden** regelmäßig Fachzeitschriften **lesen** (*MM*)	*Seven readers declared that they regularly read specialist journals*

The conditionals are used in these examples in the case of the weak verb *jobben*, or rather than the obsolescent past subjunctive *läsen*.

- It is even used in cases where a distinct *Konjunktiv I* form is available:

Gleichzeitig informierte man die Presse, die Polizei **würde** auch die Namen zweier Komplizen **kennen** (*Horizont*)	*At the same time the press was informed that the police also knew the names of two accomplices*

The past subjunctive form *kennte* is obsolete, but in this example the unambiguous *Konjunktiv I* form *kenne* would be expected according to the standard rule.

- It can be used in place of the *Konjunktiv I* form *werde* if there is a sense of 'future-in-the-past' (see **14.2.4c**):

Er glaubte, sie **würde** schon eine Lösung **finden**	*He thought that she would surely find a solution*

This last usage is very frequent in practice, and it is accepted in formal registers.

(c) The indicative is used rather than the subjunctive

If the main verb is in the past tense, the verb in indirect speech is usually in the tense of the original direct speech. However, it is sometimes shifted to the past tense, as in English. The indicative is used:

(i) in spoken German:

Sie hat gesagt, sie **weiß** es schon	*She said she knew it already*
Sie hat gesagt, sie **hat** es verstanden	She said she had understood it
Sie hat gesagt, sie **wird** den Brief noch heute schreiben	*She said she'd write the letter today*

In practice, the indicative is the most frequent variant in indirect speech in informal registers, although *Konjunktiv II* also occurs (see **(a)** above).

(ii) in writing. The indicative is fairly regular in indirect speech in written German and it is regarded as an acceptable alternative to the subjunctive in certain contexts:

- if the indirect speech is **in a clause introduced by *dass***:

Der Kanzler erklärte, dass er zu weiteren Verhandlungen bereit **ist** / **war**	*The Chancellor declared that he was prepared to enter into further negotiations*
Es wurde erzählt, dass der Verwalter ihnen persönlich das Mittagessen **auftrug** (*Wiechert*)	*It was recounted that the administrator served them lunch in person*

  If *dass* is included, the indicative is almost as frequent as the subjunctive even in written German. However, if *dass* is omitted (see **17.2.1b**), then the subjunctive is considered essential in writing, e.g. *Der Kanzler erklärte, er* **sei** *zu weiteren Verhandlungen bereit.*

- if a **first** or **second person** is involved:

Er sagte ihr, von wo ich gekommen **bin**	*He told her where I had come from*
Er hat mir erzählt, dass der	He told me that the river

Fluss hier tief **ist**	was deep here
In deinem letzten Brief hast du mir geschrieben, seine Tochter **studiert** schon vier Semester in Hamburg	*In your last letter you wrote that his daughter had already been studying in Hamburg for four semesters*

The function of *Konjunktiv I* is to distance the speaker from what is being reported, i.e. to make it clear that s/he isn't willing to vouch for whether it is true or not. For this reason it may not make sense to use it when the speaker or the listener is directly involved.

- if the 'replacement rule' (see **14.4.2b**) is ignored:

Die Verfügung des letzten deutschen Kaisers besagte, dass im Ruhrgebiet weder Universitäten noch Kasernen gebaut werden **dürfen** (*v. d. Grün*)	*The decree by the last German emperor declared that neither universities nor barracks were allowed to be built in the Ruhr*

The standard rule would require *dürfte n*, as the form *dürfen* is identical with the indicative and not a clear subjunctive. However, it is not unusual to see ambiguous forms like this in the third person plural. They are sometimes used, too, if the 'replacement rule' produces an obsolete past subjunctive form, as in the following example:

Der Unterhändler sagte, er hoffe, dass die Vernunft siege und Verhandlungen **beginnen**	*The negotiator said he hoped that reason would prevail and talks would begin*

Applying the replacement rule would result in the obsolete form *begönnen*.

- for stylistic reasons, to render the flavour of colloquial speech:

Seit der Wende denken die Nazis, sie **bestraft** ohnehin keiner	*Since unification the Nazis have thought that nobody would punish them anyway*

(d) Alleged differences in meaning between forms in reported speech

Some authorities have claimed that there is a difference in meaning between the three possible forms:

- ***Konjunktiv I***: Manfred sagte, dass er krank **gewesen sei**
- ***Konjunktiv II***: Manfred sagte, dass er krank **gewesen wäre**
- **Indicative**: Manfred sagte, dass er krank **gewesen ist**

According to this theory, *Konjunktiv I* is used merely to report Manfred's statement neutrally, without offering any personal opinion as to whether it is true or false. Using *Konjunktiv II*, on the other hand, would make it clear that the speaker thinks Manfred's statement is untrue, while the speaker's use of the indicative would acknowledge that it is a fact that he had been ill.

However, although some writers appear to have attempted to apply such a distinction, it is never consistently maintained. In practice the use of the three forms is determined not by meaning, but by register, stylistic considerations and norms of usage, as outlined in this section.

14.4.4 Indirect questions and commands

(a) Usage in indirect questions is exactly the same as in indirect statements

(i) In formal written registers *Konjunktiv I* (or *Konjunktiv II*, by the 'replacement rule') is used:

Sie fragte ihn, wie alt sein Vater **sei**	*She asked him how old his father was*
Der Lehrer fragte uns, ob wir **wüssten**, was das **bedeute** (*Böll*)	The teacher asked us if we knew what that meant
Die Dame fragte, ob denn die Typen einer bestimmten Sorte von Schreibmaschinen alle ununterscheidbar gleich **wären** (*Johnson*)	*The lady asked whether the characters of a particular make of typewriter were all the same and indistinguishable from each other*

As in statements, *Konjunktiv II* is sometimes used even if a distinct *Konjunktiv I* form is available: *Sie fragte ihn, wie alt sein Vater* **wäre**.

The indicative occasionally occurs in indirect questions in formal writing, although it is less frequent than the subjunctive:

Warum ich nicht fragte, ob Hanna noch **lebt**, weiß ich nicht (*Frisch*)	*I don't know why I didn't ask whether Hanna was still alive*

(ii) In spoken German, the indicative, *Konjunktiv II* or the *würd e* -form are used:

Sie hat ihn gefragt, wie alt sein Vater **ist/wäre**
Tante Emma hat sie gefragt, ob sie Hunger **hat/hätte**
Der Lehrer hat gefragt, ob sie es **wissen/wüßten/wissen würden**

(b) Commands are reported in indirect speech by using a modal verb

Konjunktiv I is used in writing, but both *Konjunktiv II* and the

indicative are frequent, and these are the most usual variants in spoken German.

(i) ***sollen*** is the most frequent verb used in indirect commands, see **15.6.1b**. Thus the direct command *Rufe mich morgen im Büro an!* would correspond to the indirect command:

Frau Hempel sagte ihm, er **solle/sollte/soll** sie morgen im Büro anrufen	*Ms Hempel told him to call her at the office tomorrow*

(ii) ***müssen*** indicates a more forceful command, e.g. *Frau Hempel sagte ihm, er* **müsse** / ***müsste/ muss*** *sie (unbedingt) morgen im Büro anrufen*

(iii) ***mögen*** sounds less peremptory. It is most often used in the *Konjunktiv II* form *möcht e*: *Frau Hempel sagte ihm, er* **möchte** *sie morgen im Büro anrufe n.* The *Konjunktiv I* form *möge* is also found in the most formal registers. Elsewhere it can sound stilted (or possibly facetious):

der junge Kleiderverkäufer, der mich bat, ich **möge** doch auch bei ihm etwas kaufen (*Biehl*)	*the young clothing salesman who asked me please to buy something from him, too*

14.5 Other uses of the subjunctive

14.5.1 Hypothetical comparisons

(a) Hypothetical comparative clauses: *als ob* and the subjunctive

Clauses expressing a hypothetical comparison are typically introduced by *als ob* in German, corresponding to English 'as if'. The verbs in them are regularly in the subjunctive in German.

(i) If the action in the 'as if'-clause is simultaneous with the action in the main clause, the simple **past subjunctive** is used:

Er tat, **als ob** er krank wäre	*He acted as if he was/were ill*
Das Kind weint, **als ob** es Schmerzen hätte	*The child is crying as if it is in pain*

The **conditional** can be used if the simple past subjunctive is obsolete or unusual (see **14.2.3**), as *bewürb e* would be in the following example:

Sie hatten den Eindruck, als **würde** sich Diana um die Rolle in einem Kostümfilm **bewerben** (*Spiegel*)	*They got the impression that Diana was trying for a part in a period film*

(ii) If the action in the 'as if'-clause took place before the action in the main clause, the **pluperfect subjunctive** is used:

Sie sieht aus, als ob sie seit Tagen nicht **gegessen hätte**	*She looks as if she hasn't eaten for days*
Er tat, als ob nichts **passiert wäre**	*He acted as if nothing had happened*

(iii) If the action in the 'as if'-clause will take place after the action in the main clause, the **conditional** is used:

Es sieht aus, als ob es **regnen würde**	*It looks as if it is going to rain*
Es sah aus, als ob er gleich **hinfallen würde**	*It looked as if he was about to fall down*

(b) Alternative constructions in hypothetical comparisons

(i) The ***ob*** of *als ob* can be left out. The finite verb then moves into first position, immediately after *als*:

Er tat, **als wäre** er krank Das Kind weint, **als hätte** es Schmerzen

In practice this is more frequent than *als ob* in writing, but it is very unusual in speech.

(ii) ***als wenn*** and ***wie wenn*** are less frequent alternatives to *als ob*:

Er tat, **als wenn/wie wenn** er krank wäre

Das Kind weint, **als wenn/wie wenn** es Schmerzen hätte

(iii) In written German, ***Konjunktiv I*** can be used if its form is distinct from that of the present indicative. It is less frequent than *Konjunktiv II* even in writing, and some Germans even consider it incorrect:

Er tat, als ob er krank **sei**	Es sah aus, als **werde** er hinfallen
Sie sieht aus, als ob sie seit Tagen nicht gegessen **habe**	

There is no difference in meaning between using *Konjunktiv I* and *Konjunktiv II* in 'as if'-clauses.

Konjunktiv I is sometimes used, rather than a conditional (see **(a)** above), to avoid an obsolete or unusual past subjunctive form (see **14.2.3**):

Der Eindruck, als **befände** sich die Partei auf dem Weg zurück in ihre beschwerliche Vergangenheit – als **kämpfe** sie nicht für die Überwindung akuter Probleme (*Zeit*)	*The impression that the party was on the way back to its problematic past, that it wasn't fighting to overcome immediate problems*

The *Konjunktiv II* form *kämpfte* is not distinguishable from the past indicative, and so the writer has preferred to use *Konjunktiv I* – although s/he **did** use the past subjunctive *befände* earlier in the same

sentence.

(iv) In spoken German the **indicative** is commonly used in 'as if'-clauses. The indicative is at least as frequent as the subjunctive in spoken German, especially in the North (Austrians consider it a 'Prussianism') but it is much less common in writing.

Er tat, als ob er krank **war** Sie sieht aus, als ob sie seit Tagen nicht gegessen **hat**	Es ist mir, als ob ich hinfallen **werde**

14.5.2 Clauses of purpose

(a) Clauses with *damit* 'so that' sometimes have a verb in the subjunctive

Konjunktiv I or *Konjunktiv II* is used without any difference in meaning:

Konstantin musste als Erster über den Graben, um die Flinte in Empfang zu nehmen, damit sie nicht womöglich mir ins Wasser **fiele** (*Dönhoff*)	*Konstantin had to cross the ditch first to take hold of the shotgun so that I shouldn't drop it into the water*
Einmal schickte Dionysos dem Aristippos drei Mädchen, damit er sich eine davon als Geliebte aussuchen **könne** (*SZ*)	*Dionysus once sent three girls to Aristippos so that he could choose one of them as a lover*

This usage is typical of elevated registers and can sound rather old-fashioned. The indicative is nowadays more frequent in all registers, e.g.:

Ich habe ihm auch Bücher gebracht, damit er sich nicht **langweilte** und	*I brought him some books too, so that he didn't get bored and wasn't*

nicht immer gezwungen **war**, an seine Verschwörungen zu denken (*Bergengruen*)	*always compelled to be thinking of his plots*

The modal verbs ***können*** and ***sollen*** are often used in *damit* -clauses, especially (but not only) in spoken German, e.g.:

Dieses Jahr vermietete ein Hausbesitzer einen Teil des Dachs an einen Mobilfunkbetreiber, damit dieser dort eine Antenne aufstellen **konnte** (*MM*)	*This year a house-owner rented out part of his roof to a mobile telephone company, so that it could set up an aerial there.*

(b) The conjunction *auf dass* 'so that'

auf dass is an alternative to *damit*. It sounds archaic and solemn and is usually followed by a subjunctive (usually *Konjunktiv I* if the form is unambiguous):

Der Häuptling eines Eingeborenenstammes verfluchte sie, **auf dass** ihnen nichts von allem, was sie dem Boden und den Gewässern abgewinnen würde, je zum Nutzen **gereiche** (*Spiegel*)	*The chief of a native tribe cursed them, that they might never derive benefit from anything they gained from the soil or the waters*

14.5.3 *Konjunktiv II* can moderate the tone of an utterance

Konjunktiv II can sound less blunt than the indicative and is often used to tone down an assertion, a statement, a request or a question. This usage is very frequent, especially in spoken German, and the conditional is often used in similar contexts with a similar effect in English. The simple past subjunctive of the common verbs is used, or the conditional form of others:

Ich **wüsste** wohl, was zu tun **wäre**	*I think I know what's to be done*
Eine Frage **hätte** ich doch noch	There's one more thing I'd like to ask
Da **wäre** er nun aufgewacht	He seems to have woken up
Ich **würde** auch **meinen**, dass es jetzt zu spät ist	It seems a little late to me, too
Diese Sache **hätten** wir also geregelt	We would appear to have sorted that out
Das **wär**'s für heute	I think that's enough for today
Hätten Sie sonst noch einen Wunsch?	Is there anything else you would like?
Würden Sie bitte das Fenster **zumachen** ?	Would you be so kind as to shut the window?
Könnten Sie mir bitte sagen, wie ich zum Bahnhof komme?	*Could you please tell me how to get to the station?*

14.5.4 *Konjunktiv II* in time clauses

Konjunktiv II is sometimes used in time clauses introduced by ***bis***, ***bevor*** or ***ehe***. The use of the subjunctive in these clauses is restricted to formal written German and is an optional (and much less usual) alternative to the indicative. It can stress that it was still in doubt whether the action or event in question would or did actually take place:

Sie beschlossen zu warten, bis er **käme**	*They decided to wait till he came*
Er weigerte sich, den Vertrag zu unterzeichnen, bevor wir ihm weitere Zugeständnisse **gemacht hätten**	*He refused to sign the contract before we had made further concessions*

14.5.5 *Konjunktiv II* in negative contexts

Konjunktiv II can be used in contexts where an event, action or state was possible, but in fact did not take place or was not the case. The

indicative is almost always a possible alternative, especially in speech, but it can sound less tentative. Such contexts are:

(a) After the conjunctions *nicht dass, ohne dass* and *als dass*

Nicht, dass er faul **wäre** (*or* ist), aber er kommt in seinem Beruf nicht voran	*Not that he's lazy, but he's not getting on in his career*
Es wurden auch häppchenweise private Daten gesammelt, angeblich ohne dass das Unternehmen davon **wüsste** (**weiß** would sound more definite)	Private data was also collected little by little – allegedly without the company knowing anything about it
Die Auswahl war zu klein, als dass ich mich **hätte** schnell entscheiden mögen (*Grass*)	*The choice was too small for me to have wanted to decide quickly*

The set phrase ***nicht dass ich (es) wüsste*** 'not that I know of' is always used in that form, with a subjunctive.

(b) In other subordinate clauses where the main clause and/or the subordinate clause have a negative element

So gab es keine menschliche Tätigkeit, die nicht von Gestank begleitet gewesen **wäre** (*Süßkind*)	*So there was no human activity which was not accompanied by stench*
Es gibt nichts, was schwieriger **wäre** (*or* ist), als der Gebrauch des Konjunktivs	There's nothing more difficult than the use of the subjunctive
nicht eine einzige Großstadt, die nicht ihr Gesicht in zwei Jahrzehnten gründlich gewandelt **hätte** (*Zeit*) (**hat** would sound much more positive)	*not a single city that has not changed its appearance totally in twenty years*

(c) In sentences with *fast* or *beinahe*

In these the pluperfect subjunctive can be used to emphasize that something almost happened, but didn't:

Er **wäre** (*or* ist) **beinahe hingefallen**	*He almost fell down*
Ich **wäre** (*or* bin) **fast nicht gekommen**	I nearly didn't come
Wir **hätten** (*or* haben) das Spiel **beinahe gewonnen**	*We almost won the match*

14.5.6 The subjunctive in wishes, instructions and commands

(a) *Konjunktiv I* can be used in the third person to express a wish

In modern German this is largely restricted to set phrases, e.g.:

Gott **segne** dich/dieses Haus!	*God bless you/this house!*
Es **lebe** die Freiheit!	Long live freedom!
Gott **sei** Dank!	Thank God!
Behüte dich Gott!	*God protect you!*

The use of the *Konjunktiv I* of *mögen* in wishes, e.g. *Möge er glücklich sein!* 'May he be happy!' is archaic.

(b) A conditional clause with *Konjunktiv II* can express a wish

The clause can have the form with or without *wenn*, see **14.3.3a**. The wish can be strengthened by adding *doch* and/or *nur* or *bloß* (see **9.1.7e** and **9.1.25c**):

Wenn er doch nur **käme** !	*If only he would come*
Wenn er bloß fleißiger **arbeiten würde** !	If only he would work harder!
	If only I'd stayed at home!
Wenn ich bloß/nur/doch zu Hause **geblieben wäre** !	*If only my father hadn't bought this house!*
Hätte mein Vater doch dieses Haus nie **gekauft** !	

(c) The *Konjunktiv I* of *sein* or the *sein*-passive can express a proposition

This usage is typical of technical or mathematical language:

Gegeben **sei** ein Dreieck ABC	*Given a triangle ABC*
In diesem Zusammenhang **sei** nur darauf verwiesen, dass diese Hypothese auf Einstein zurückgeht	*In this context we merely wish to point out that this hypothesis goes back to Einstein*

In mathematical contexts the indicative is nowadays at least as common as the subjunctive, e.g. *Gegeben* **ist** *ein Dreieck ABC.*

(d) *Konjunktiv I* in commands or instructions

As the imperative only has forms for the second person, the subjunctive is used in commands or instructions in the third person and the first person plural (see **14.1.2**):

Also, **spielen** wir jetzt Karten!	*Well, let's play cards*
Im Notfall **wende** man sich an den Hausmeister!	*In case of emergency please apply to the caretaker*

The modal auxiliaries

Six verbs in German are known as the MODAL AUXILIARY verbs:

dürfen	**mögen**	**sollen**
können	**müssen**	**wollen**

They are '**modal**' verbs because their typical function is to **indicate the attitude of the speaker with regard to what is being said**, expressing ideas like ability, possibility, permission, necessity, obligation and volition. This range of meaning is related to that of the MODAL PARTICLES (see Chapter 9) and the category of MOOD (see Chapter 14). They are '**auxiliary**' verbs because they are typically used with other verbs.

The modal auxiliary verbs are all **irregular** (see **10.1.3c**), and their forms are given in full in Table 10.12. This chapter explains the **features** and **uses** of the modal auxiliaries:

- The **forms** and **syntactic features** of the modal auxiliary verbs (section **15.1**)
- The **individual modal auxiliary** verbs:
    - **dürfen** (section **15.2**)
    - **können** (section **15.3**)
    - **mögen** (section **15.4**)
    - **müssen** (section **15.5**)
    - **sollen** (section **15.6**)
    - **wollen** (section **15.7**)

15.1 The modal auxiliaries: form and syntax

The modal auxiliary verbs have **several features which set them apart from other German verbs**, and from their English equivalents. The most important of these are listed briefly below and explained in the sections indicated:

- Their forms are wholly **irregular** in similar ways (see **10.1.3c** and **Table 10.12**)
- They have a full range of **tense** and **mood** forms (see **15.1.1**)
- They are used with a '**bare**' **infinitive**, without *zu* (see **11.3.1a** and **15.1.2a**)
- Their **perfect tenses** are constructed with the **infinitive** (see **11.3.2a** and **15.1.2b**)

15.1.1 Tense and mood forms

The German modal auxiliaries have a full range of tense and mood forms. In this they differ from the corresponding English verbs (*can*, *may*, *must*, etc.), which have at most only a present tense and a past tense (which often has conditional meaning). German *können*, for example, can be used in the future tense:

Er **wird** es morgen nicht machen **können** *He* **won't be able** *to do it tomorrow*

English 'can' has no future tense, so the paraphrase 'be able to' has to be used to refer to the future. Similarly, there is a clear difference in German between the past tense ***konnte***, which means '**was able to**', and the past subjunctive ***könnte***, which means '**would be able to**'. English 'could', on the other hand, can be used in either sense, depending on the context:

Ich **konnte** sie gestern nicht besuchen, weil ich keine Zeit hatte	*I couldn't visit her yesterday, because I didn't have time*
Ich **könnte** sie morgen besuchen,	*I could visit her tomorrow if you let*

wenn ich das Auto nehmen dürfte *me take the car*

Because of this, the German modal auxiliaries can seem complex, but they are easier to sort out if the various combinations of tense and mood with a following simple or compound infinitive are treated independently and learned with their usual English equivalents. The examples in sections **15.2** to **15.7** are set out to facilitate this, and **Table 15.1** illustrates the various possible combinations with *können*.

Table 15.1 The tenses and moods of *könne n* with an infinitive

Tense	Infinitive type	Example	
present	**+ infinitive**	Er **kann** es	*He can do it*
present	+ perfect	**machen**	He can have done
future	infinitive	Er **kann** es	it
past	+ infinitive	**gemacht haben**	He will be able to
perfect	+ infinitive	Er **wird** es	do it
pluperfect	+ infinitive	**machen können**	He was able to do
past subj.	+ infinitive	Er **konnte** es	it
past subj.	+ infinitive	**machen**	He has been able
pluperf. subj.	+ perfect	Er **hat** es **machen**	to do it
	infinitive	**können**	He had been able
	+ infinitive	Er **hatte** es	to do it
		machen können	He could do it
		Er **könnte** es	He could have
		machen	done it
		Er **könnte** es	*He would have*
		gemacht haben	*been able to do it*
		Er **hätte** es	
		machen können	

15.1.2 Constructions with the modal auxiliaries

Further general information on word order with modal verbs is given in **19.1**.

(a) The modal auxiliaries are followed by a 'bare' infinitive

(see **11.3.1a**). This is similar to the typical English equivalents of these verbs, which are not used with 'to'. As **Table 15.1** shows, they can be followed by a simple or a compound infinitive:

Ich kann **schwimmen**	*I can swim*
Darf ich **gehen** ?	May I go?
Sie muss es **gesehen haben**	*She must have seen it*

(b) The perfect tenses of modal auxiliaries

In the perfect tenses, the infinitive of the modal verbs is used instead of the past participle:

Wir haben meinen Onkel nicht besuchen **können**	*We weren't able to visit my uncle*
Das habe ich ihr versprechen **müssen**	I had to promise her that
Sie hätte das Buch lesen **sollen**	*She ought to have read the book*

However, the past participle is used if the modal auxiliary is used on its own, without a following infinitive (see **11.3.2** and **15.1.2e**), e.g. *Ich habe es nicht* **gewollt**.

The use of the past participle if the modal auxiliary is used with a following infinitive, e.g. *Herbert hat arbeiten gemusst*, is not unknown in spoken German, but it is not accepted as standard.

(c) In main clauses the infinitive of the main verb is in final position

Darf ich heute Tennis **spielen** ?	*May I play tennis today?*
Ich möchte das Buch gern **lesen**	*I would like to read that book*

In compound tenses, the infinitive of the modal verb comes **after** the infinitive of the main verb at the end of the clause:

Sie wird morgen nicht **kommen können**	*She won't be able to come tomorrow*
Sie hätte ihrem Mann doch **helfen sollen**	*She really ought to have helped her husband*

(d) In infinitive clauses, the modal verb follows the infinitive of the main verb

i.e. at the **end** of the infinitive clause, with the infinitive particle *zu* between the main verb and the modal verb:

Es scheint **regnen zu wollen**	*It looks as if it's going to rain*
Sie gab vor, meine Handschrift **nicht lesen zu können**	*She claimed not to be able to read my handwriting*

(e) In subordinate clauses, the modal verb follows the infinitive of the main verb

i.e. it comes at the end of the clause:

Wenn Sie diesen Ring heute nicht **kaufen wollen**, …	*If you don't want to buy this ring today, …*
Obwohl ich gestern Abend **ausgehen durfte**, …	*Although I was allowed to go out last night, …*
die Frau, die ich **besuchen sollte**	*the woman I ought to visit*

If a modal verb is used in a compound tense in a subordinate clause, the tense auxiliary *werden* or *haben* comes **before** the two infinitives:

Obwohl ich ihn morgen **werde** besuchen können, …	*Although I'll be able to visit him tomorrow*
Es war klar, dass er sich **würde** anstrengen müssen	It was clear that he would have to exert himself

Das Buch, das ich **hätte** kaufen sollen, kostete dreißig Euro	The book I ought to have bought cost thirty euros
Sie hat mir gesagt, dass sie es **hat** machen müssen	*She told me she had had to do it*

A similar order is usual with a **passive infinitive**:

… weil der Vertrag **hätte** überprüft werden sollen	*… because the contract should have been checked*

If there are **two modals** in the clause, the finite one may come before **or** after the two infinitives:

… weil sie ihrem Bruder **müsste** helfen können/ … weil sie ihrem Bruder helfen können **müsste**	}	*… because she should be able to help her brother*

In Austrian usage, the tense auxiliary is often placed between the main verb and the modal verb, e.g.:

am Flughafen Wien-Schwechat, wo die Luftraumsperre von 0.00 Uhr bis 5.00 Uhr **dauern hätte sollen** (*Standard*)	*at Vienna Schwechat airport, where the airspace closure should have lasted from midnight to 5 a.m.*

This order is quite usual in Austria, but it is not accepted as standard elsewhere.

(f) The omission of the main verb after the modal auxiliaries

The infinitive of the main verb can be left understood and omitted in some contexts:

(i) if the main verb is a **verb of motion**. If there is an adverbial

or, very commonly, a separable prefix in the sentence which conveys the idea of movement, a specific verb of motion can be omitted after the modal verb. This usage is very common in everyday speech, but it is found in writing, too:

Wo wollen Sie morgen hin?	*Where do you want to go tomorrow?*
Ich will nach Frankfurt	I want to go to Frankfurt
Ich sollte zu meinem Onkel	I ought to go to my uncle's
Ich kann heute Abend nicht ins Kino	I can't go to the cinema tonight
Sie will ihm nach	She wants to go after him
Ich möchte jetzt fort	*I'd like to leave now*

If the modal is at the end of the clause, a separable prefix is written together with it, e.g. *Sie wissen ja, dass Sie jetzt zu Fuß nach Elberfeld* ***zurückmüssen***.

The verb understood is usually *gehen*, *kommen* or *fahren*, as would be the case in the above examples, but other verbs can be omitted if the idea of movement is sufficiently clear from the adverbial or the prefix:

Er wollte über die Mauer [klettern]	*He wanted to climb over the wall*
Die Strömung war so stark, dass er nicht bis ans Ufer [schwimmen] konnte	*The current was so strong that he couldn't swim to the bank*

The omission of a verb of motion is most common with simple tenses of the modals, but it is frequently found with the future and perfect tenses of *können* and *müsse n* (and in the perfect, exceptionally, the past participle of the modal is used):

Er hat ins Geschäft gemusst	*He's had to go to work*
Ich glaube schon, ich werde vorbeikönnen	*I think I'll be able to get past*

(ii) if the main verb is ***tun***:

Das kann ich nicht	*I can't do that*
Das darfst/sollst du nicht	You mustn't/ought not to do that
Was soll ich damit?	What am I supposed to do with it?
Ich kann nichts dafür	I can't help it
Er kann was	*He is very able*

(iii) if the main verb has **just been mentioned**

This often corresponds to English usage. Optionally, *es* can be added to make it clear that a previous phrase is being referred to, see **3.6.1a**:

Ich wollte Tennis spielen, aber ich konnte/ durfte (es) nicht	*I wanted to play tennis, but I couldn't/wasn't allowed to*
Der junge Spieler könnte niemanden erkennen, auch wenn er es wollte	*The young player wouldn't be able to recognize anyone even if he wanted to*

(iv) in some **idiomatic or colloquial phrases**:

Ich kann nicht mehr [weitermachen]	*I can't go on*
Was soll das eigentlich [bedeuten]?	What's the point of that?
Sie hat nicht mehr gewollt	She didn't want to go on
Er kann mich [am Arsch lecken] (*vulg.*)	He can kiss my ass
Mir kann keiner [was antun]	No-one can touch me
Dürfen wir Pommes [haben]?	*Can we have chips/fries?*

(g) In German two modals can be used in the same sentence

This is quite different to standard English, which does not permit two modal verbs to occur in the same sentence:

Rechnen **muss** doch jeder **können**	*But everyone has to be able to add up*
Wir **müssten** hier spielen **dürfen**	We should be allowed to play here
Wie **kannst** du das nur machen **wollen** ?	*How can you want to do that?*

15.2 *dürfen*

15.2.1 *dürfen* most often expresses permission

(a) In this sense *dürfen* corresponds to English 'be allowed to' or 'may'

Sie **dürfen** hereinkommen	{	*They may/can come in* *They are allowed to come in*
Sie **durfte** ausgehen, wenn sie wollte		*She was allowed to go out when she wanted to*
Endlich **durfte** er die Augen wieder aufmachen		At last he could open his eyes again
Sie **wird** erst heute Nachmittag mit uns spielen **dürfen**		*She won't be allowed to play with us till this afternoon*

In English, 'can' often expresses permission and is often preferred to 'may', which can sound affected. *können* is sometimes heard for *dürfen* in everyday speech in this sense (see **15.3.4**), but it is less common than English 'can'.

(b) Negative *dürfen* has the sense of English 'must not'

i.e. it expresses a prohibition (= 'not be allowed to'):

Sie **dürfen nicht** hereinkommen	{	*They mustn't come in* *They're not allowed to come in*
Aber ich **darf** mich **nicht** loben (*Langgässer*) Wir **dürfen** es uns **nicht** zu leicht machen (*Brecht*)		*But I mustn't praise myself* *We mustn't make it too easy for ourselves*

nicht müssen usually means 'doesn't have to', 'needn't', not 'mustn't', see **15.5.1c**.

(c) *Konjunktiv II* forms of *nicht dürfen*

These often correspond to English 'shouldn't', 'ought not to', but *dürfen* keeps its basic sense of permission in such contexts and thus sounds more incisive than *sollen*, see **15.6.4a**:

Das **dürfte** sie doch gar **nicht** wissen	*She ought not to know that* (i.e. it shouldn't be allowed)
Er **hätte** so etwas **nicht** machen **dürfen**	*He ought not to have done anything like that* (i.e. someone should have forbidden it)

(d) *dürfen* is commonly used in polite formulas

In these, it usually corresponds to English 'can', with the tone of a polite request or a tentative suggestion:

Das **darf** als Vorteil betrachtet werden	*That can/may be seen as an advantage*
Was **darf** sein? (in a shop or restaurant)	How can/may I help you?
Der Wein **dürfte** etwas trockener sein	The wine could just be a bit drier
	Could I ask you to pass the salt?
	We are pleased to be able to

Dürfte ich Sie um das Salz bitten?	*welcome you here*
Wir freuen uns, Sie hier begrüßen zu **dürfen**	

15.2.2 *dürfen* can express probability

The *Konjunktiv II* of *dürfen* expresses an assumption that something is likely:

Das **dürfte** reichen	*That will probably be enough*
Manchester United **dürfte** unser bisher schwerster Gegner in der Champions League werden	Manchester United will probably be our most difficult opponent so far in the Champions League
Das **dürfte** ein Vermögen gekostet haben	*That'll have cost a fortune*

This sense of *dürfen* is very close to that of the future tense with *werden* (see **12.3.2**), or that of the modal particle *wohl* (see **9.1.34**).

15.3 *können*

15.3.1 *können* most often expresses ability

Its usual English equivalents are 'can' or 'be able to':

Sie **kann** ihn heute besuchen		*She can/is able to visit him today*
Ich **konnte** sie gestern nicht besuchen	}	*I couldn't visit her yesterday/I wasn't able to visit her yesterday*
Ich **habe** sie gestern nicht besuchen **können**		
Ich **werde** sie morgen besuchen **können**		*I'll be able to visit her tomorrow*
Ich **könnte** sie morgen		I could visit her

besuchen, wenn ich Zeit hätte	tomorrow if I had time
Ich **hätte** sie gestern besuchen **können**, wenn ich Zeit gehabt hätte	*I would have been able to/could have visited her yesterday, if I'd had time*

15.3.2 *können* can express possibility

(a) In this sense *können* usually corresponds to English 'may'

Das **kann** sein	*That may be*
Ich **kann** mich irren	I may be wrong
Er **kann** krank sein	*He may be ill*

However, the use of ***können* to express possibility is limited**. In general *können* can only be used in this sense in contexts where it cannot possibly be understood to mean 'be able to'. Thus, *Sie kann ihn heute besuchen* can only mean 'She is able to visit him today'. In such contexts one of the other ways of expressing 'may' in German given in **(b)** below has to be used.

Using *können* to express possibility is most often an option:

(i) with a **perfect** or **passive infinitive**:

Er **kann** den Schlüssel verloren haben	*He may have lost the key*
Die Straße **kann** gesperrt sein	The road may be blocked
Er **kann** krank gewesen sein	*He may have been ill*

(ii) in the ***Konjunktiv II* form *könnte*** (= English 'might' or 'could'), to indicate a remote possibility:

Sie **könnte** jetzt in Wien sein	*She might/could be in Vienna*

Wir **hätten** umkommen **können**	*now* We might/could have been killed
Er **könnte** krank sein	He might/could be ill
Er **könnte** krank gewesen sein	*He might/could have been ill*

(iii) *könnte* can also be used to express a **tentative request** (see **14.5.3**):

Könnten Sie mir bitte helfen?	*Could you please help me?*

(b) Other German equivalents for English 'may', 'might'

Since *können* can only be used in the sense of possibility in contexts where it cannot be understood to mean 'be able to', we often need to express the idea of possibility in German in other ways, i.e.:

(i) with the adverbs *vielleicht* or *möglicherweise*, or a paraphrase (e.g. *Es ist möglich, dass …*). Compare the following possibilities for English 'He may be working in the garden':

Vielleicht arbeitet er im Garten

Es ist möglich, **dass** er im Garten arbeitet

Möglicherweise arbeitet er im Garten

Er kann im Garten arbeiten can only mean 'He is able to work in the garden'.

(ii) In sentences with a negative, the same alternatives can be used, or the sense of possibility can be made clear by adding *auch* to *nicht können* (see **9.1.4**), especially if you are contradicting something just said. *nicht* is stressed in these contexts:

Sie **kann auch nicht** kommen	}	*She may not come*

Möglicherweise kommt sie nicht Er **kann auch nicht** krank gewesen sein **Vielleicht** ist er gar nicht krank gewesen	}	*He may not have been ill*
Sie **kann** das Auto **auch nicht** gesehen haben **Vielleicht** hat sie das Auto gar nicht gesehen	}	*She may not have seen the car*

15.3.3 *können* in the meaning 'know'

i.e. to 'know' something you have learned. This applies especially to languages, school subjects, the rules of games, etc. In practice, *können* is a full verb in these contexts, not an auxiliary, and is used without a following infinitive:

Er **kann** Spanisch	*He can speak Spanish*
Ich **kann** die Melodie der österreichischen Nationalhymne	*I know the tune of the Austrian national anthem* (i.e. 'I've learnt it')
Kann der Manfred Skat?	*Does Manfred know how to play Skat?*
Ich **kann** den Trick	*I know that trick* (i.e. 'I can do it'. Compare *Ich* **kenne** *den Trick* 'I've seen it before')

15.3.4 *können* used to express permission

i.e. in the sense of *dürfen* (see **15.2.1**). This usage is colloquial:

Kann ich herein?	*Can I come in?*
Du **kannst** den Bleistift behalten	*You can keep the pencil*

However, even in colloquial German *können* is less frequent to express permission than is 'can' in English.

15.3.5 English 'can' with verbs of sensation

können is used much less often than English 'can' with verbs of sensation, such as 'see', 'hear', 'feel' and 'smell'. These are often used with 'can' in English without any real idea of being able, but in practice to make up for the fact that these verbs cannot normally be used in progressive tenses to express a continuous action. In this way, 'I can see it/hear it' is used because we cannot say 'I am seeing it/hearing it'. *können* is not needed in German unless the idea of ability is being emphasized:

Ich sehe die Kirche	*I can see the church*
Ich höre Musik	I can hear music
Sie sahen die Stadt im Tal liegen	*They could see the town lying in the valley*

15.3.6 English 'I couldn't help …'

There are a number of alternative possibilities in German for this construction, e.g. for English 'I couldn't help laughing':

(i) Ich musste einfach lachen
(ii) Ich konnte nicht anders, ich musste lachen
(iii) Ich konnte nichts dafür, ich musste lachen

(iv) Ich konnte nicht umhin zu lachen

Alternative (i) is the simplest and most usual in speech, although (ii) and (iii) are quite current. Alternative (iv) is restricted to formal registers.

15.3.7 *könnte* … gemacht haben and hätte … machen

können

These constructions have different meanings in German. The English equivalents for both are 'could have done' or 'might have done', but German makes distinctions which we ignore in English, e.g.:

Sie **könnte** den Brief nicht **geschrieben haben**	*She couldn't have written the letter* (i.e. it couldn't have been her who wrote it)
Sie **hätte** den Brief nicht **schreiben können**	*She couldn't have written the letter* (i.e. she wouldn't have been able to)
Er **könnte umgekommen sein**	*He might have been killed* (i.e. it is possible that he was killed)
Er **hätte umkommen können**	*He might have been killed* (i.e. it was possible, but he wasn't)

15.4 *mögen*

15.4.1 *mögen* most often expresses liking

This is by far the most common use of *mögen* in present-day German

(a) It is most frequent in the *Konjunktiv II* form *möchte*

This expresses a polite request and usually corresponds to English 'would like' or 'want'. It is often linked with the adverb *gern*:

Sie **möchte** (gern) nach Rom fahren	*She would like to go to Rome*
Ich **möchte** nichts mehr davon hören	I don't want to hear any more about it
Ich **möchte** ihr Gesicht gesehen haben	I would have liked to see her face
Ich **möchte** nicht, dass er heute	*I don't want him to come today*

kommt

The pluperfect subjunctive is also used occasionally in this sense, e.g.:

Baldini **hätte** ihn erwürgen **mögen** (*Süßkind*)	*Baldini would have liked to strangle him*

In general, though, German more often simply uses *gern* with the pluperfect subjunctive of the verb, e.g., for 'I would have liked to read the book', *Ich* **hätte gern** *dieses Buch* **gelesen**.

(b) Other tenses of *mögen* are used in the sense of English 'like'

(i) As a full verb, on its own, it occurs most often (although not exclusively) in the negative, chiefly with reference to people, places and food:

Sie **mag** keinen Tee	*She doesn't like tea*
Ich **mag** ihn nicht	I don't like him
Sie **hat** ihn nie **gemocht**	She never liked him
Meine Frau hat extra Apfelkuchen gebacken, den mit dem dicken Rahm, den Sie so gern **mögen** (*Balden*)	*My wife has baked apple cake especially, the one with the thick cream which you like so much*

(ii) With a following infinitive it is only used in the negative:

Wie es im Winter werden soll, daran **mag** er noch gar nicht denken (*Zeit*)	*He doesn't want to think about what it's going to be like in winter*
Ich **mag** das Wort gar nicht aussprechen	I don't even like saying that word out loud
Ich **mag** diese Fragen nicht beantworten (*BILD*)	I don't want to answer these questions
Er **mochte** nicht allein an der Straße stehen (*Johnson*)	*He didn't want to stand on the street alone*

15.4.2 *mögen* sometimes expresses possibility or probability

The use of *mögen* to express possibility is largely limited to formal written registers and set phrases (although it is more widely used in speech in the South). When it is used it tends to express a rather higher degree of probability than *können*, see **15.3.2**.

(a) *mögen* typically indicates a reasonable degree of probability

i.e. somewhere between 'possible' and 'probable':

Sie **mag/mochte** etwa sechzig sein	*She is/was probably about sixty*
Die parteipolitischen Attacken der Opposition **mögen** auch eine Rolle gespielt haben (*MM*)	The party political attacks of the opposition probably also played a part
An einem Sonntag im März – es **mochte** etwa ein Jahr seit seiner Ankunft in Grasse vergangen sein (*Süßkind*)	*On a Sunday in March – a year or so had probably gone by since his arrival in Grasse*

(b) When indicating possibility *mögen* often has a concessive sense

i.e. there is an expected qualification by a following *aber* (which may or may not be present). This usage is similar to English 'That may well be (, but …)':

Das **mag** vielen nicht einleuchten, (aber …)	*That may not be clear to many, (but …)*
Das Tief **mag** über Italien weiterwandern und den Balkan einnässen. Wir aber fliegen dorthin, wo die Sonne scheint (*Grzimek*)	The low may drift over Italy and make the Balkans wet. But we're flying to where the sun shines
	For a time it might have appeared

Eine Zeitlang **mochte** es scheinen, dass es gelänge, das Absinken der deutschen Währung abzubremsen, doch schien es nur so (*Heuss*)	*that the attempt to stop the German currency falling would be successful, but that appearance was deceptive*

(c) Idiomatic phrases with *mögen* expressing possibility

These are common phrases which are used in spoken German as well as in formal writing:

Das mag (wohl) sein	*That may well be*
Wer mag das (schon) sein?	Who can that be?
Wie mag das (nur) gekommen sein?	*How can that have happened?*

A few phrases with *möchte* convey a **doubt** or a supposition:

Ich möchte meinen, dass …	*I should think that …*
Dabei möchte man verrückt werden	*It's enough to drive you mad*

könnte can be used for *möchte* in contexts like these, but it sounds rather less tentative.

15.4.3 *mögen* in concessive clauses

i.e. the German equivalent of English clauses like 'whatever/whoever that may be', etc. (see also **17.6.2a**). *mögen* is often used in these clauses, especially in writing:

Wann er auch ankommen mag, …	*Whenever he may arrive …*
Was auch immer geschehen mag, …	*Whatever happens …*
Wer er auch sein mag, …	*Whoever he may be …*

Alternatively, the main verb can simply be used on its own, and in practice this is more frequent in less formal registers, especially in spoken German:

Wann er auch	Was auch immer	Wer er auch **ist**, …

ankommt, … **geschieht**, …

However, *mögen* is always used in the set phrase ***Wie dem auch sein mag*** 'However that may be'.

15.4.4 *mögen* in wishes and commands

(a) *Konjunktiv I* of *mögen* can express a wish or a command in the third person

Möge er glücklich sein!	*May he be happy!*
Die Herren **mögen** bitte unten warten	*Would the gentlemen be so kind as to wait downstairs?*

This usage is limited to formal German and sounds old-fashioned, see **14.1.2b**.

(b) The subjunctive of *mögen* is used in indirect commands

Sagen Sie ihr, sie **möchte** zu mir kommen	*Ask her to be kind enough to come and see me*
Er sagte mir, ich **möchte** einen Augenblick auf ihn warten	*He asked me to wait for him a moment*

The *Konjunktiv I* of *mögen* (e.g. …, *sie* **möge** *zu mir kommen*) is also used in indirect commands in formal registers. For further details, see **14.4.4b**.

15.5 *müssen*

15.5.1 *müssen* most often expresses necessity or compulsion

(a) The usual English equivalents are 'must' or 'have (got) to'

Wir **müssen** jetzt abfahren		*We must leave now/We have (got) to leave now*
Wir **werden** bald abfahren **müssen**		*We'll have to leave soon*
Ich **musste** um acht abfahren	}	*I had to leave at eight*
Ich **habe** um acht abfahren **müssen**		
Ich **muss** den Brief bis heute Abend **geschrieben haben**		*I've got to have the letter written by tonight*
Wir **mussten** die Anträge bis zum 15. Januar **abgegeben haben**		We had to have the applications handed in by the 15th of January
Sie **muss** sich beeilen, wenn sie den Zug erreichen will		*She'll have to hurry if she wants to catch the train*

(b) 'need' is sometimes a more natural English equivalent for *müssen*

This is especially the case with a passive infinitive or a passive equivalent:

Das **muss** gut überlegt werden	*That needs thinking about properly*
Man **muss** sich um sie kümmern	*She needs looking after*

(c) Negative *müssen* keeps the sense of necessity

It usually has the sense of English 'needn't' or 'don't have to':

Wir **müssen** noch **nicht** gehen	*We needn't go yet/We don't have to go yet*
Er **hat** es **nicht** tun **müssen**	He didn't need to/didn't have to do it
Du **musst nicht** hier bleiben, du kannst auch gehen	*You don't need to stay here, you can leave*

In practice *nicht brauchen* (see **11.2.4**) is at least as frequent as *nicht müssen* in this meaning, e.g. *Du brauchst nicht hier zu bleiben.*

English '**mustn't**' expresses a **prohibition**, and its usual German equivalent is ***nicht dürfen***, see **15.2.1b**. *nicht müssen* is sometimes used in this sense in speech, e.g. *Sie müssen hier nicht parken* 'You mustn't park here', but this is considered to be a non-standard (northern) regionalism.

15.5.2 *müssen* can express a logical deduction

(a) This corresponds to English 'must' or 'have to'

Sie spielt heute Tennis, also **muss** es ihr besser gehen	*She's playing tennis today, so she must be better*
Das **muss** ein Fehler sein	That must/has (got) to be a mistake
Sie **muss** den Unfall gesehen haben	*She must have seen the accident*

If *müssen* could be taken in context to express necessity where logical deduction is intended, the meaning can be made clear by using the adverb *sicher* rather than *müssen*, e.g.:

Er ist heute **sicher** in Frankfurt	*He must be in Frankfurt today*

Er muss heute in Frankfurt sein would naturally be understood to mean 'He has to be in Frankfurt today'.

(b) The past tense of *mussen* with a simple infinitive expresses a logical deduction in the past

In such contexts English uses 'must' with a compound infinitive:

Er schuftete, dass ihm heiß sein **musste** (*Grass*)	*He was working hard, so he must have been hot*

(c) A logical deduction can be queried by *nicht brauchen*

This is commoner than *nicht müsse n*, e.g.:

Er war heute nicht im Büro, aber er **braucht nicht** deshalb krank zu sein	*He wasn't in the office today, but that doesn't mean to say that he's ill*

aber er muss nicht deshalb krank sein would be a less frequent alternative.

(d) A negative logical deduction is expressed by nicht *können*

This corresponds to English 'can't':

Sie spielt heute Tennis, also **kann** sie **nicht** krank sein	*She's playing tennis today, so she can't be ill*

15.5.3 The *Konjunktiv II* of *müssen*

(a) *müsste* can express a possible compulsion or necessity

In this sense it corresponds to English 'would have to' or'need to':

Er weiß ja nicht, was er tut – ich **müsste** ja sonst meine Hand von ihm zurückziehen (*Böll*)	*He doesn't know what he's doing – otherwise I would have to disown him*
Es sind Felsen, Gestein, wahrscheinlich vulkanisch, das **müsste** man nachsehen und feststellen (*Frisch*)	*They are rocks and stones, probably volcanic, that would need to be checked and established*

In negative sentences the *Konjunktiv II* of *nicht brauchen* is more usual than that of *nicht müsse n*, see **15.5.2c**:

Du hättest **nicht** hinzugehen **brauchen**, wenn …	*You wouldn't have had to go there if …*

(b) *müsste* can express a logical probability or necessity

In this sense, 'should' or 'ought to' are the usual English equivalents:

Deutschlands Kohle ist teurer, als sie sein **müsste** (*Zeit*)	*Coal in Germany is dearer than it ought to be/ should be*
Das **müsste** eigentlich reichen	That really ought to be enough
Ich **hätte** mich vielleicht anders ausdrücken **müssen**	*Perhaps I ought to/should have expressed myself differently*

This sense of ***müsste* is close to that of *sollte***, which also corresponds to English 'should' or'ought to', see **15.6.4**. There is a difference, though, as ***sollte* always expresses an obligation** (often laid on a person by someone else), whereas ***müsste* expresses a logical probability or necessity**. Compare:

Sie **sollte** heute im Büro sein (i.e. she is obliged to be if she	*She ought to be at the office today*

doesn't want to get into trouble)	
Sie **müsste** heute im Büro sein (i.e. I assume that is the most likely place for her to be)	*She ought to be at the office today*
Das **hätte** er eigentlich wissen **sollen** (i.e. he was obliged to – it could have stopped him making a mistake)	*He ought to have known that*
Das **hätte** er eigentlich wissen **müssen** (i.e. I would have thought it was a pretty fair assumption that he did)	*He ought to have known that*
Wo ist der Brief? Er **müsste** in dieser Schublade sein (A logical deduction: *sollte* is not possible, as there can be no obligation on a letter to be in a particular drawer)	*Where's the letter? It ought to be/ should be in this drawer*

müsste nicht is not normally used as an equivalent for English 'shouldn't' or 'ought not to'; we usually find ***sollte nicht*** or ***dürfte nicht***, see **15.2.1c** and **15.6.4**.

(c) *müsste ... gemacht haben and hätte ... machen müssen*

The English equivalent for both these constructions is usually 'should/ ought to have done', but there is often a distinction between them in German. Compare, for English *He ought to have written the letter yesterday*:

Er **müsste** den Brief schon gestern **geschrieben haben** (i.e. it is a fair deduction that he did)
Er **hätte** den Brief schon gestern **schreiben müssen** (i.e. one might assume that he did, but he didn't)

15.6 *sollen*

15.6.1 *sollen* most often expresses an obligation

(a) This corresponds to 'be to', 'be supposed to' or (in a few special contexts) 'shall'

Um wie viel Uhr **soll** ich kommen?	*What time am I to/shall I come?*
Ich **soll** nicht so viel trinken	I'm not supposed to drink so much
Was **soll** ich in Greifswald tun?	What am I (supposed) to do in Greifswald?
Sie wusste nicht, was sie tun **sollte**	She didn't know what to do
Wir **sollten** uns gestern treffen	*We were (supposed) to meet yesterday*

The meaning of *sollen* is close to that of *müsse n*, and 'must', 'have to' is often a possible English equivalent. However, *sollen* always conveys the idea that some other person is making an obligation. Compare:

Ich **soll** hier bleiben	*I am to/have (got) to stay here* (i.e. someone's told me to)
Ich **muss** hier bleiben	*I've got to stay here* (i.e. I need to)

In questions, the past tense of *sollen* can be used to prompt a strong reaction (negative or positive, depending on the context). It can sound ironic:

Wie **sollte** ich das wissen?	*How was I (supposed) to know that?*
Sollte das nun fertig sein?	*Is that supposed to be finished?* (ironic)
Sollte er wirklich nichts davon wissen?	*Is he really supposed not to know anything about it?*

(b) *sollen* often has the force of a command

See also **14.1.3e**. This use is related to the basic sense of obligation:

Du **sollst** nicht stehlen	*Thou shalt not steal*
Du **sollst** das Fenster zumachen	(I want you to) shut the window
Man **soll** sofort den Saal verlassen	Everyone has to leave the room immediately
Das **soll** dir eine Warnung sein	Let that be a warning to you
Er **soll** sofort kommen	*He is to/has got to come at once/Tell him to come at once*

sollen is the most frequent modal auxiliary in indirect commands (see **14.4.4b**):

Sie sagte ihm, er **solle/sollte** unten warten	*She told him to wait downstairs*
Ich habe ihm gesagt, er **soll** seinem Vater helfen	*I told him to help his father*

15.6.2 *sollen* can express an intention or prediction

(a) In this sense *sollen* corresponds to 'be to', 'be supposed/meant to'

In London **soll** bald ein neuer Terminal gebaut werden	*A new terminal is to be built soon in London*
Soll das ein Kompliment sein?	Is that meant as a compliment?
Es **sollte** eine Überraschung sein	It was intended to be a surprise
Was **soll** das heißen?	What's that supposed to mean?
Es **soll** nicht wieder vorkommen	It won't happen again
Das **sollst** du noch bereuen	*You're going to regret that*

(b) The sense of intention is common in first person plural questions

In such contexts *sollen* is an alternative to *wollen*, although there is a slight difference of meaning, see **15.7.1b**. Whereas *sollen* leaves the decision entirely to the other person(s), *wollen* in the same context would indicate that the speaker is in favour:

Was **sollen wir** uns heute in Berlin ansehen?	*What are we going to look at in Berlin today?*
Sollen wir heute Abend ins Kino gehen?	*Shall we go to the cinema tonight?*

(c) The past tense of *sollen* can indicate what was destined to happen

This sense is essentially that of a 'future-in-the-past':

Diese Meinung **sollte** sie noch oft zu hören bekommen	*She would often hear this opinion again*
Er **sollte** früh sterben	He would/was (destined) to die young
Er **sollte** niemals nach Deutschland zurückkehren	*He would never return to Germany*

In these contexts *sollte* differs slightly from *würde* (see **14.2.3c**), since it indicates that this is a prediction by the speaker.

15.6.3 *sollen* can express a rumour or report

i.e. 'It is said that …'. Only the present tense of *sollen* is used in this sense, with a compound infinitive to refer to past time if necessary:

Er **soll** steinreich (gewesen) sein	*He is said to be (have been) enormously rich*
Bei den Unruhen **soll** es bisher vier Tote gegeben haben (*FAZ*)	So far four people are reported to have been killed in the course of the riots
Das Auto **soll** eine rote Ampel überfahren haben (*MM*)	*The car is reported to have gone through a red light*

15.6.4 The *Konjunktiv II* of *sollen*

(a) The *Konjunktiv II* of *sollen* conveys the idea of a possible obligation

sollte or ***hatte … sollen*** are thus the commonest equivalents of English 'should (have)', 'ought to (have)':

Warum **sollte** ich denn nicht ins Theater gehen?	*Why shouldn't I go to the theatre?*
Das **solltest** du mal probieren	You ought just to try that
Das **sollte** ihm inzwischen klar geworden sein	He ought to have realized that by now
Das **hätten** Sie mir aber gestern sagen **sollen**	*You ought to have told me that yesterday*

For negative 'shouldn't', 'ought not to', ***dürfte nicht*** can be used as a more incisive alternative to *sollte nicht*, see **15.2.1c**.

For the distinction between ***sollte*** and ***müsste*** as equivalents of English 'should'/'ought to', see **15.5.3b**.

(b) *sollte … gemacht haben and hätte … machen sollen*

The English equivalent for both these constructions is usually 'should'/'ought to have done', but German can make a distinction between them. Thus, for English 'She ought to have written the letter yesterday':

Sie **sollte** den Brief gestern **geschrieben haben** (i.e. I would expect her to have done so)
Sie **hätte** den Brief gestern **schreiben sollen** (i.e. she ought to have done, but she didn't)

(c) In questions, the *Konjunktiv II* of *sollen* is often used as an alternative to *können*

There is no significant difference in meaning:

Wie **sollte/könnte** ich das wissen?	*How could I know that?*
Wie **hätte** ich das wissen **sollen/können** ?	How could I have known that?
Warum **sollte/könnte** er nicht einmal in London gewesen sein?	*Why shouldn't he have been to London some time?*

(d) *sollte* is often used in conditional sentences and clauses of purpose

(i) In conditional sentences it corresponds to 'should' or 'were to', see **14.3.1d**:

Wenn/Falls es regnen **sollte**, so komme ich nicht	*If it should rain, I shan't/won't come*
Sollten Sie ihn sehen, dann grüßen Sie ihn bitte von mir	*If you were to see him, please give him my regards*

(ii) *sollen* is often used in clauses of purpose with *damit* (see **17.5.1a**):

Ich trat zurück, damit sie mich nicht sehen **sollten**	*I stepped back, so that they shouldn't see me*

For alternative usage in clauses of purpose see **14.5.2.**

15.7 *wollen*

15.7.1 *wollen* most often expresses desire or intention

(a) In many contexts it expresses a wish

(i) It usually corresponds to English 'want/wish (to)':

Sie **will** ihn um Geld bitten	}	*She wants to ask him for money*
Sie **wollte** ihn um Geld bitten		*She wanted to ask him for money*
Sie **hat** ihm um Geld bitten **wollen**		
Hättest du kommen **wollen** ?		*Would you have wanted to come?*
Willst du nicht deinem Vater helfen?		*Don't you want to help your father?*

(ii) In this sense, *wollen* is often used without a dependent infinitive, as a full verb:

Was **wollen** Sie von mir?	*What do you want from me?*
Der Arzt **will**, dass ich mehr Bewegung mache	The doctor wants me to take more exercise
Mach, was du **willst**	*Do what you like*

(iii) The sense of 'wish' is often given by *Konjunktiv II* to stress that the wish isn't or wasn't fulfilled:

Ich **wollte**, ich hätte sie nicht so beleidigt	*I wish I hadn't offended her so much*
Ich **wollte**, ich wäre zu Hause	*I wish I was at home*

(iv) *wollen* can correspond to English 'will', 'would':

Er **will** es nicht zugeben	*He won't admit it*
Ich bat sie, es zu tun, aber sie **wollte** nicht	I asked her to do it, but she wouldn't
Willst du mir helfen? Ja, ich **will** dir helfen	*Will you help me? Yes, I will help you*

wollen in this sense is distinct in meaning from the future tense.

Wirst *du mir helfen? Ja, ich* **werde** *dir helfen* sound more impersonal and lack the sense of active intention which is conveyed by *wollen* and which is closer to English 'want', i.e. 'Do you want to help me? Yes, I want to help you'.

(v) *wollen* is common in second person questions with the sense of an insistent request:

Willst du bitte noch mal nachsehen?	*Will you have another look, please?*
Wollen Sie bitte die Frage wiederholen?	*Will you repeat the question, please?*

In requests like these, the conditional (i.e. ***Würden*** *Sie bitte noch mal nachsehen?*, see **14.5.3**) sounds rather less blunt and direct than *wollen*.

(b) *wollen* can express intention

(i) In such contexts it often corresponds to English 'be going to', but *wollen* stresses the notion of intention more forcefully than the future with *werden*:

Wir **wollen** uns bald einen neuen Smart TV anschaffen (The future *Wir* **werden** *uns bald einen neuen Smart TV anschaffen* sounds less like a definite intention)	*We're going to buy ourselves a new Smart TV soon*
Wie **wollen** Sie ihm das klarmachen?	*How are you going to explain that to him?*
Ich **wollte** Sie darüber fragen	I was going to ask you about it
Was **wollen** Sie damit sagen?	What do you intend by that?
Das **will** nicht viel sagen	That doesn't mean much
Ich **will** sie erst morgen anrufen	I don't intend phoning her/I'm not going to phone her until tomorrow
Es scheint regnen zu **wollen**	*It looks as if it's going to rain*

(ii) In first person plural questions *wollen* has the sense of English 'Shall we ...?':

Wollen wir eine Tasse Kaffee trinken?	*Shall we/Let's have a cup of coffee*
Was **wollen wir** heute machen?	What shall we do today?
Na, dann **wollen wir** mal (anfangen)?	*Well then, let's get on with it!*

sollen is an alternative to *wollen* in such constructions, see **15.6.2b**. However, there is a slight difference in meaning. *wollen* clearly indicates that the speaker is in favour of the proposal, but *sollen* leaves the decision entirely to the other person(s).

(c) With an inanimate subject, *wollen* corresponds to English 'need'

The sense of *wollen* in these contexts is similar to that in **(a)** and **(b)** above, but English 'want' and 'wish' are not normally used with an inanimate subject:

Tomaten **wollen** viel Sonne	*Tomatoes need a lot of sun*
Eine solche Arbeit **will** Zeit haben	A piece of work like that needs time
Das **will** gut überlegt werden	*That needs proper consideration*

Negative *wollen* with an inanimate subject has the sense of 'refuse':

Der Koffer **wollte** nicht zugehen	*The suitcase refused to/wouldn't close*
Meine Beine **wollen** nicht mehr	My legs won't carry me any further
Das **will** mir nicht in den Kopf	*I can't grasp that*

15.7.2 *wollen* can be used in the sense of 'claim'

In this sense, *wollen* is usually linked with a perfect infinitive, typically

with the implication that the claim is false:

Er **will** eine Villa auf Mallorca **gekauft haben**	*He claims to have bought a villa on Majorca*
Sie **wollen** dich in Berlin **gesehen haben**	They say they saw you in Berlin
eine ehemalige Geliebte, die nichts gesehen haben **will**, weil sie „schockiert" war (*MM*)	*a former lover who claims not to have seen anything because she was 'shocked'*

A few set phrases are an extension of this sense of *wollen*:

Keiner will es getan haben	*No-one admits doing it*
Ich will nichts gesagt haben	Go on as if I hadn't said anything
Ich will nichts gehört/gesehen/gemerkt haben	*I'll go on as if I hadn't heard/seen/noticed anything*

Verbs: valency

Different verbs need different elements to make a grammatical sentence. The elements which a particular verb needs to form a grammatical sentence are called the COMPLEMENTS of the verb, and the type and number of complements required by a particular verb to construct a grammatical sentence make up the VALENCY of the verb.

In particular, German typically shows the **relationship** between the **complements** and the **verb** by using **cases** (see Chapter 2). English noun phrases do not have endings to show case, and the relationship of the complements to the verb is indicated more often by their **position** (see Chapter 21).

The various sections of this chapter explain the valency and the complements of verbs, with particular emphasis on verbs and constructions in German which are different from their nearest English equivalents.

- verb **valency**, **complements** and **sentence patterns** (section **16.1**)
- the **subject** of the verb (section **16.2**)
- the **accusative** or **direct object** of the verb (section **16.3**)
- verb objects in the **dative** case (section **16.4**)
- **prepositional** objects (section **16.5**)
- **predicate complements** (section **16.6**)
- verb objects in the **genitive** case (section **16.7**)

• **locative complements** (section **16.8**)

16.1 Valency, complements and sentence patterns

16.1.1 The complements of the verb

The complements of a particular verb are the elements it needs to construct a grammatical sentence. Different verbs need different elements – the action of giving, for instance, involves a person handing a thing over to another person. The verb *geben*, therefore, needs three elements to form a sentence: a SUBJECT (in the **nominative** case), a DIRECT OBJECT (in the **accusative** case) and an INDIRECT OBJECT (in the **dative** case):

Mein Vater (nom.) hat **seinem Bruder** (dat.) doch **das Geld** (acc.) gegeben

If we omitted any of these, the sentence would be ungrammatical. Other verbs, like *telefonieren*, only need one element, in this case a **subject**:

Ich habe eben telefoniert *I've just made a phone call*

Many verbs, like *schlagen*, need two, i.e. a **subject** and a **direct object**:

Sie hat **den Ball** geschlagen *She hit the ball*

Some verbs have other types of construction, for example with a **subject** and a phrase with a particular preposition (a '**prepositional object**'), like *warten*:

Ich habe lange **auf dich** gewartet *I waited a long time for you*

There are **seven types of complement in German**, as shown in Table 16.1. The most important is the **subject**, which all but a few verbs must have and which is dealt with in **16.2**. Full details about the other complements are given in sections **16.3–16.8**.

Table 16.1 Verb complements in German

subject	a noun phrase in the **nominative** case	**Der Bäcker** trinkt zu viel Hier wächst **ein guter Wein** Das hast **du** mir doch versprochen!
accusative object	a noun phrase in the **accusative** case	Er trinkt **schwarzen Tee** Sie hat mir **diesen Roman** empfohlen **Diesen Mann** sah er in der Stadt
dative object	a noun phrase in the **dative** case	Sie verkaufte **mir** einen Laptop Ich habe soben **Markus** gemailt **Ihrem Mann** wollte ich helfen
genitive object	a noun phrase in the **genitive** case	Er bedarf **meiner Hilfe** Er erinnerte sich **des Vorfalls** Sie wurde **des Mordes** angeklagt
prepositional object	a **phrase** introduced by a **preposition** determined by the verb	Sie warnte mich **vor dem Polizisten** Er starb **an einer Lungenentzündung** **Darauf** hatte sie lange gewartet
locative complement	a **phrase** indicating	Sie wohnt **in**

	place with a **verb of position** or **direction** with a **verb of motion**	**Heiligenhafen** Gestern ist sie **in die Stadt** gefahren Er legte das Buch **auf den Tisch**
predicate complement	a noun phrase in the **nominative** case or an **adjective** with a copular verb	Er ist **ihr Betreuer** Wir sind **älter** geworden Das Heft war **teuer**

16.1.2 Verb valency

Every German verb GOVERNS a specific number of complements of a particular type. ***geben***, for instance, as in the example in **16.1.1**, has three: a **subject**, an **accusative** or **direct object** and a **dative** or **indirect object**, whereas ***telefonieren*** has only a subject. The property of each verb to govern a certain number of complements of a particular type is the VALENCY of the verb.

We have to know the valency of a German verb to be able to use it correctly. This is sometimes different from the valency of what may seem to be the equivalent English verb:

Das hat er **mir** gestern mitgeteilt	*He informed me of that yesterday*
Ich fürchte **mich vor dem Zahnarzt**	I'm afraid of the dentist
Er riet **ihr von dieser Reise** ab	*He advised her against (making) this journey*

English-speaking learners need to learn the valency of each verb carefully in order to be able to use it in context. It is good practice to learn German verbs in typical sentences containing them.

A number of verbs, especially the most frequent, are used with different valencies which are often associated with differences in meaning:

jdn. achten	*respect somebody*
auf jdn. achten	*pay attention to somebody*

Further examples are given in the remainder of this chapter.

16.1.3 German sentence patterns

All German verbs are used with one, two or three of the complements listed in **Table 16.1** to form a grammatical clause or sentence. How many there are, and of what type, makes up the valency of the verb.

There are a limited number of combinations of complements which occur commonly with German verbs, since many verbs have the same valency. In this way, we can say that German possesses a restricted number of possible sentence structure types or SENTENCE PATTERNS (the German term is ***Satzbaupläne***). For example, many verbs are ***einem etwas*** verbs, like *geben*, and need an **accusative object** and a **dative object** besides the **subject**.

The **most frequent sentence patterns** of German are given in **Table 16.2**. They are explained in the remainder of this chapter under the heading of the individual complements, where some less frequent sentence patterns are also introduced.

Table 16.2 German sentence patterns

subject + verb	**Der Mann** schwimmt
subject + verb + accusative object	**Der Mann** kauft **den Fernseher**
subject + verb + dative object + accusative object	**Der Mann** gibt **seinem Bruder den Fernseher**
subject + verb + dative object	**Der Mann** hilft **seinem Bruder**
subject + verb + prepositional object	**Der Mann** wartet **auf seinen Bruder**

subject + verb + predicate complement	**Der Mann** ist **nett/ein netter Mensch**
subject + verb + locative complement	**Der Mann** fährt **in die Stadt**

16.1.4 Complements and adverbials

The complements are those elements in a sentence which are linked closely to the verb. However, a sentence can contain other elements:

Mein Vater hat seinem Bruder **gestern** das Geld gegeben

Heute habe ich diesen Mann **in der Stadt** gesehen

Sie wohnte **lange** in Halle

Gestern ging sie **schnell** in die Stadt

Words and phrases like those in bold type provide additional information, often about the time, manner or place of the action or event. They may be important in context, but they are not closely bound up with the basic meaning of the verb like the complements. If we leave them out, the sentence is still grammatical. These elements are ADVERBIALS (in German *freie Angaben*). They can be single words (ADVERBS) or phrases, and they can be classified into types as shown in Table 7.1.

Frequently, **complements are necessary** to make a grammatical sentence, whilst **adverbials can be left out** without the sentence becoming ungrammatical. But the distinction is not always as clear-cut, since certain complements of some verbs can be omitted without the result being an ungrammatical sentence. Compare:

Er trinkt **viel Kaffee**	Er trinkt	Sie fährt **in die Stadt**	Sie fährt

The sentences are still grammatical even when the complements in bold

are left out. However, the action of *trinken* must involve consuming some liquid (the direct object), and the action of *fahren* always implies going somewhere (the locative complement). These elements are so closely bound up in meaning with the action of the verb that, even if we can leave them out in some contexts, they are implicit in the sentence, and they are complements rather than adverbials. They are not simply extra pieces of information about the circumstances of the action.

The same word or phrase can be a complement in some contexts, but an adverbial in others. Compare:

Sie wohnte **in Köln**:	*in Köln* is a **complement** to *wohnen*; it cannot be omitted
Sie starb **in Köln**:	*in Köln* can be omitted; it is an **adverbial** adding extra information

16.2 The subject

16.2.1 Most German verbs require a subject

Characteristically, the **subject** of verbs in the active voice is the AGENT, i.e. the animate being carrying out the action, e.g. ***der Räuber*** *hat das Geld gestohlen*, ***die Studenten*** *singen*, ***der Bär*** *frisst das Fleisch.*

(a) The subject is in the nominative case

The finite verb agrees with the subject, see **10.1.4**:

Ich reise nach Italien
Das hat uns **die Geschichte** gelehrt
Wer ruft mich?

Kommen **deine Geschwister** morgen?

For the use of *es* as a 'dummy subject' in order to permit the real subject to occur later, e.g. ***Es** stand eine alte Frau am Fenster*, see **3.6.2d**.

(b) The subject can be a subordinate clause or an infinitive clause

In this case, the verb has the third person singular ending, see **10.1.4a**.

Dass du hier bist, freut mich

Dich wiederzusehen hat mich gefreut

Subordinate subject clauses are introduced by *dass* or an interrogative, see **17.2**. For further information on subject infinitive clauses see **11.2.2**. If a clause is not in first position in the sentence, it can be anticipated by *es*, e.g. *Es freut mich, dass du hier bist*, see **3.6.2e**.

(c) The subject can be 'understood' in certain contexts

In German as in English, we can leave out the subject of the verb in some contexts. In particular, if the verbs in two (or more) main clauses linked by the coordinating conjunctions *und* and *oder* (see **17.1**) have the same subject, the second (or subsequent subject) is often omitted. We say that the subject is 'understood' in the second clause:

Er kam herein und sah seine Frau in der Ecke sitzen	*He came in and saw his wife sitting in the corner*
Meine Schwester geht oft ins Kino oder besucht ein Konzert	*My sister often goes to the cinema or attends a concert*

16.2.2 A few verbs do not need a subject

These verbs just have an **accusative** or a **dative object** (depending on the verb), but **no subject**. The verb is in the **third person singular** form, e.g. ***mich hungert***, ***mir bangt***. Most of these verbs express an emotion or a sensation, and almost all are now limited to formal or literary registers, or to regional (especially southern) usage. The following are still used (more frequently used equivalents are given where appropriate):

Mir **bangt** vor etwas (*dat.*) (More usual: *Ich habe Angst vor etwas*)	*I am afraid of sth.*
Mich **dürstet**, **hungert** (More usual: *Ich habe Durst, Hunger*)	I am thirsty, hungry
Mir (Mich) **ekelt** vor etwas (*dat.*) (More usual: *Es ekelt mich/Ich ekele mich vor etwas* or *Etwas ekelt mich*)	*I am disgusted at sth.*
Mich **friert** (More usual: *Es friert mich* or, more colloquially: *Ich friere*)	*I am cold*
Mir **graut** vor jdm./etwas (*dat.*) (More usual: *Es graut mir vor etwas*)	*I have a horror of sb./sth.*
Mich/Mir **schaudert** vor etwas (*dat.*) (More usual: *Es schaudert mich vor etwas*)	I shudder at sth.
Mir (Mich) **schwindelt** (More usual: *Mir ist schwindlig*)	I feel dizzy
Mir **träumte** von etwas (*dat.*) (More usual: *Ich träumte von etwas*)	I dreamed of sth.
Mich **wundert**, dass … (Still quite frequent, but there are common alternatives: *Es wundert mich/Ich wundere mich, dass*)	*I am surprised that …*

The impersonal constructions with *sein* and *werden* and an adjective linked with the dative of a person experiencing a sensation, e.g. *Mir ist kalt*, *übel*, etc., are similar to the constructions with these verbs, in particular because they are most often used with the dative in first

position and the impersonal subject omitted. For details see **2.5.4c** and **16.2.4e**.

16.2.3 The subject in German and English: differences

German is more restrictive than English in respect of the noun which can occur as the subject of the verb. In English nouns which do not denote an agent can often be used as the subject of the verb. This is less frequent in German, where the subject of the verb is usually the agent actually performing the action. In such cases, the noun which is the subject in English typically appears in a prepositional phrase in German:

In diesem Hotel sind Hunde verboten	**This hotel** *forbids dogs*
In diesem Zelt können vier schlafen	**This tent** *sleeps four*
Mit dieser Anzeige verkaufen wir viel	**This advertisement** *will sell us a lot*
Wir können **mit diesem Prozess** nicht fortfahren	**This trial** *cannot proceed*
Damit haben wir unseren besten Mittelstürmer verloren	**This** *has lost us our best striker*
In Berlin wird es wieder ziemlich heiß sein	**Berlin** *will be rather hot again*

A thing like a hotel cannot really 'forbid'. Neither do 'tents' actually 'sleep' or 'advertisements' do any 'selling', etc., and, in the last example, Berlin is **where** 'it' is hot rather than a person feeling the heat. The German constructions reflect this more clearly than do the corresponding English sentences.

16.2.4 The impersonal subject *es*

Many verbs are exclusively or commonly used impersonally, with the

indefinite subject ***es*** (see also **3.6.2a**), which corresponds to English 'it' or 'there'. The *es* can only be omitted in the constructions dealt with in sub-sections **(e)** and **(f)** below.

(a) Verbs referring to weather

These verbs are only used impersonally:

Es regnet, hagelt, schneit	*It is raining, hailing, snowing*
Es blitzte	There were flashes of lightning
Es dämmert	*It is growing light/dusk*

(b) Verbs used with impersonal *es* to refer to an indefinite agent

These are verbs which **can** be used with a specific subject, but are used impersonally if the agent is vague or unknown:

(i) verbs referring to natural phenomena:

Es zieht	*There's a draught*
Es brennt	*Something's burning*
Dort riecht **es** nach Teer	*There's a smell of tar there*

(ii) verbs denoting noises:

Es läutet, klingelt	*Someone's ringing the bell*
Es hat an der Tür geklopft	*There was a knock at the door*
Es kracht, zischt, knallt	*There is a crashing, hissing, banging noise*

Many other verbs can be used with an impersonal *es* to express the idea of a vague impersonal agent, see **3.6.2a**.

(c) Verbs denoting sensations and emotions

Many verbs denoting sensations can be used with an impersonal *es* as subject to give the idea of an unspecified force causing the sensation. The person involved appears as an accusative object:

Es juckt mich	*I itch*
Es überlief mich kalt	A cold shiver ran up my back
Es zog mich zu ihr	I was drawn to her
Es hält mich hier nicht länger	*Nothing's keeping me here any more*

Most verbs which can be used without a subject in formal or older German are now more usually constructed like this, e.g. *Es friert mich, Es wundert mich*, etc. See **16.2.2** for details.

(d) Impersonal *es* with *sein* or *werden* followed by a noun or an adjective

This usually corrresponds to English 'it':

Es ist, wurde spät	*It is, got late*
Es ist dein Vater	*It's your father*

Further details on this use of *es* are given in **3.6.2b**. The use of *es ist* in the sense of English 'there is/are' is treated in detail in **16.2.5**.

(e) The impersonal use of *sein* and *werden* with a dative

sein and *werden* can be used impersonally with a personal dative and some adjectives expressing a sensation:

Es ist mir heiß, kalt, schwindlig, übel, warm, etc.

For details see **2.5.4c**. *es* is often left out if it is not in first position in a main clause:

Ist (es) dir kalt? Ja, mir ist (es) kalt
Ich merkte, dass (es) mir schwindlig wurde

(f) Impersonal passive and reflexive constructions

Es lebt sich gut in dieser Stadt	*You can live well in this city*
Es wurde im Nebenzimmer geredet	*People were talking in the next room*

es is usually left out unless it is in initial position in a main clause. For details see **3.6.2a** and **13.1.3 – 4**.

(g) Other impersonal verbs and constructions

Many other verbs can be used in impersonal constructions as well as with a definite subject, and several of these have become frequent idioms:

Es fehlt mir an etwas (*dat.*) (see also **16.4.2d**)	*I lack sth.*
Es gefällt mir in Heidelberg (see also **16.4.2d**)	I like it in Heidelberg
Wie geht es (dir/Ihnen)?	How are you?
Es geht	*It can be done; OK (* in answer to *Wie geht es (dir/Ihnen)?)*
Es geht um Leben und Tod	It's a matter of life and death
Es gilt, etwas zu tun	Something must be done
Es geschah ihm recht	It served him right
Es handelt sich um etwas (*acc.*)	It is a question of sth.
Es heißt, dass …	It is said that …
Es kommt auf etwas (*acc.*) an	It depends on sth.
Es kommt zu etwas (*dat.*) e.g. Am	Something occurs e.g. There were fresh clashes in the evening

Abend **kam es zu** neuen Zusammenstößen	It is due to sth. e.g. Why is it that …?
Es liegt an etwas (*dat.*) e.g. Woran liegt es, dass …?	It doesn't matter
Es macht/tut nichts	Things look bad/better for him
Es steht schlecht/besser um ihn	How's she doing?
Wie steht es mit ihr?	*Things are like that e.g. Things are similar at the University of Münster*
Es verhält sich so e.g. Ähnlich **verhält es sich** an der Universität Münster	

16.2.5 *es ist/sind* and *es gibt*

es ist/sind and *es gibt* are both equivalents of English 'there is/are' but they have rather different meanings.

(a) *es gibt* indicates existence in general

It is a real impersonal construction, and *es* is never omitted. However, it has become so frequently used that, in the form *gibs*, it has almost become an independent word in non-standard colloquial speech, e.g. *da gibs schon mehr als genug*, and it is even heard with another *es*, e.g. *Ich weiß nicht, wo's die gibs.*

In everyday speech in south-west Germany, *es hat* is used for *es gibt*. This is a non-standard regionalism.

(i) *es gibt* is typically used in broad, general statements, denoting existence in general, without necessarily referring to a particular place:

Es gibt Tage, wo alles schief geht	*There are days when everything goes wrong*
So etwas **gibt es** nicht	*There's no such thing*
Es gibt verschiedene Gründe dafür	*There are various reasons for that*
Dort **hat** es schon häufig Ärger **gegeben** (*HMP*)	*There has often been trouble there*

(ii) *es gibt* is used to point in a general way to permanent existence in a large area (i.e. a city or a country):

Es gibt drei alte Kirchen in dieser Stadt	*There are three old churches in this town*
In Trier **gibt es** ja so viel zu sehen	*There's so much to see in Trier*
Es dürfte in der Bundesrepublik wenige **geben**, die so gut wie er informiert sind (*Zeit*)	*There are probably not many people in the Federal Republic who are as well informed as he is*

(iii) *es gibt* records the consequences of some event:

Wenn du das tust, **gibt's** ein Unglück	*If you do that, there'll be an accident*
Bei den Unruhen **soll es** bisher vier Tote **gegeben haben** (*FAZ*)	*It is reported that there have been four killed in the disturbances so far*

(b) *es ist/sind* indicates the presence of something at a particular time and place

The *es* of *es ist/sind* is a 'dummy' subject (see **3.6.2d**), which allows the real subject of the verb to occur later in the sentence. It drops out when it is not in initial position in a main clause. Compare:

Es war eine Maus in der Küche	*There was a mouse in the kitchen*
In der Küche **war** eine Maus	In the kitchen there was a mouse
Er hat gemerkt, dass eine Maus in der Küche **war**	*He noticed that there was a mouse in the kitchen*

***es ist/sind* is used**:

(i) to refer to permanent or temporary presence in a definite and limited place, or temporary presence in a large area:

Es war noch ein kleines Café in der Berliner Straße	*There was still a little café in the Berliner Strasse*
Es ist irgendjemand an der Tür	*There's someone at the door*
Es waren noch viele Menschen auf den Straßen	*There were still a lot of people in the streets*
Es sind keine Wolken am Himmel **gewesen**	*There were no clouds in the sky*

Sentences with *es ist/sind* **must** contain an indication of place. This is often quite simply *da*:

Es ist ein Brief für Sie **da**	*There's a letter for you there*

es gibt is sometimes used in contexts like this, but it emphasizes the thing rather than the place and underlines its distinctive character:

In dieser Diele **gab es** gegenüber der Tür einen offenen Kamin (*Wendt*)	*In this lounge there was an open fireplace opposite the door*

(ii) to record events and when speaking of weather conditions:

Letzte Woche **war** in Hamburg ein Streik	*There was a strike in Hamburg last week*
In Mainz **war** ein Aufenthalt von fünf Minuten	*There was a five-minute stop in Mainz*
Am nächsten Morgen **war** dichter Nebel	*Next morning there was thick fog*
Gestern **war** ein Gewitter in Füssen	*There was a thunderstorm in Füssen yesterday*

Usage varies in contexts like this, and *es gibt* is often used without any real difference of meaning:

Letzte Woche **gab es** einen Streik in Hamburg

In Mainz **gab es** einen Aufenthalt von fünf Minuten

Gestern **gab es** ein Gewitter in Füssen

es gibt is particularly frequent when a need is felt to emphasize the exceptional nature of the event or to refer to the future:

Es gab eine Explosion in der Fabrik	*There was an explosion in the factory*
Morgen **wird es** wieder schönes Wetter **geben**	*It will be fine again tomorrow*

16.3 The accusative object

16.3.1 Transitive verbs govern a direct object in the accusative case

Verbs which govern an accusative object are called TRANSITIVE VERBS. This accusative object is known as the DIRECT OBJECT of these verbs. With many of these verbs, the direct object is the only complement apart from the subject:

Er hat **sie** besucht

Christian hat **seine Freundin** besucht

Seine Worte haben **mich** verletzt

Den Arzt hat sie nicht gesehen

Many transitive verbs can have other complements in addition to the direct object, in particular:

• a **dative object**: Maria hat **ihrem Freund** den Reiseführer geliehen

• a **prepositional object**: Der Jäger hat die Kinder **vor dem Wolf** gewarnt

• a **locative complement**: Albrecht hat den Besen **in die Ecke** gestellt

• a **genitive object**: Adelheid würdigte ihren Kollegen **keines Blickes**

Details about these other sentence patterns with direct objects are given in the sections dealing with the other relevant complement.

The accusative case is used in some **time** and **place phrases**, e.g. *Es hat* **den ganzen Tag** *geschneit.* These are not complements of the verb, but **adverbials**, see **2.2.2**.

16.3.2 The direct object can have the form of a clause

(a) Many verbs can have a clause as their direct object

Because these clauses function as complements of the verb, they are called COMPLEMENT CLAUSES. These clauses can be:

(i) A **subordinate clause** with *dass, ob* or an interrogative (see **17.2**):

Ich bedauerte, **dass ich nicht kommen konnte**

Sie fragte mich, **ob ich dort übernachten wollte**

Sie hatte vergessen, **wie man es macht**

(ii) An **infinitive clause** with *zu* (see **11.2.2**):

Ich bedauerte **nicht kommen zu können**

Ich hoffe **dich bald wiedersehen zu können**

Ich habe vor **sie morgen zu besuchen**

Many verbs which have a clause as object can have either a subordinate clause or an infinitive clause, like *bedauern* in the examples above.

However, a few verbs only allow an infinitive clause (especially verbs denoting an intended action, like *versuchen, vorhaben, wagen, sich weigern, zögern*), whereas others only allow a subordinate clause (especially verbs of saying and hearing, e.g. *erleben, fragen, mitteilen, verfügen*). In practice, usage in German is similar to that with the nearest English equivalents. For the main exceptions see **11.2.3**.

(b) A direct object clause is sometimes anticipated by *es*

This can be the case whether the complement is a subordinate clause or an infinitive clause, e.g.:

> Sie sah **es** als gutes Zeichen an, dass keine Leute mehr vorbeikamen
>
> Ich konnte **es** kaum ertragen, ihn so leiden zu sehen

Details on the use of this 'anticipatory' *es* are given in **3.6.2f**.

16.3.3 A few verbs are used with two accusative objects

Although the general rule is that only one accusative object is possible in a sentence, there are a few verbs which govern two accusative objects.

A second accusative with verbs of calling, e.g. *Er nannte mich einen gemeinen Schurken* is not an object but a predicate complement in the accusative, see **16.6.2**.

(a) *kosten* and *lehren* are normally used with two accusatives

Der Flug hat **meinen Vater 5000 Euro** gekostet	*The flight cost my father 5000 euros*
Sie hat **mich Deutsch** gelehrt	*She taught me German*

In colloquial German both these verbs are often used with a dative of the person, e.g. *Sie hat* **mir** *Deutsch gelehrt; Das hat* **mir** *viel Geld gekostet*. This is not generally considered standard, but it is acceptable with *kosten*, as an alternative to the accusative, in figurative contexts:

Das kann **ihn/ihm** den Hals kosten	*That may cost him his life*

(b) *abfragen* and *abhören* 'test sb. orally'

These verbs can be used **either** with two accusative objects **or** a dative of the person and an accusative:

Der Lehrer hat **ihn/ihm** die englischen Vokabeln abgefragt/ abgehört	*The teacher tested him on his English vocabulary*

If only the person is mentioned, they are in the accusative: *Der Lehrer hat* **ihn** *abgefragt* / *abgehört*

(c) *bitten* and *fragen* can be used with two accusatives

One denotes the person asked, the other is an indefinite pronoun or a subordinate clause:

Hast du **ihn etwas** gefragt?	*Did you ask him something?*
Das möchte ich **dich** bitten	I would like to request that of you
Sie fragte **ihn**, **ob er mitkommen wollte**	*She asked him if he wanted to come with her*

bitten is more often used with a prepositional object introduced by *um*, see **16.6.10**: *Ich möchte dich* **darum** *bitten*.

(d) *angehen* is used with an accusative of the person

and an indefinite expression of quantity

Das geht **dich nichts** an *That doesn't concern you at all*

Similarly: *Das geht mich viel/wenig/einen Dreck an.* Using *angehen* with a dative of the person (e.g. *Das geht* **dir** *nichts an*) is a North German regionalism which is not accepted as standard.

16.3.4 Transitive verbs in German and English: important differences

There are a number of instances where the construction used with some English transitive verbs differs significantly from that used with what seems to be their nearest equivalent in German.

(a) Fewer verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively in German than in English

Many German verbs are less flexible than their nearest English counterparts and more restricted to use in certain constructions only. A few German verbs can be used both transitively and intransitively, e.g.:

Ich brach den Zweig	*I broke the branch*
Der Zweig brach	The branch broke
Sie rollte den Ball ins Netz	She rolled the ball into the net
Der Ball rollte ins Netz	*The ball rolled into the net*

Far fewer German than English verbs can be used in this way, which means that many English verbs have two (or more) German equivalents depending on whether the English verb is being used transitively or intransitively. These can take a number of forms:

(i) **Different verbs are used in German** for the transitive and intransitive constructions:

grow Er **züchtet** Blumen Die Blumen **wachsen** im Garten	*He grows flowers* *The flowers grow in the garden*
leave Sie **verließ** das Haus Ich **ließ** den Brief im Fach (**liegen**) Der Zug **fährt** schon **ab** Er **ging** früher als ich (**weg**)	*She left the house* *I left the letter in the pigeonhole* *The train is already leaving* *He left before me*
open (see also **(iii)** below) Ich **machte** die Tür **auf** Die Tür **ging auf**	*I opened the door* *The door opened*

(ii) **Related verbs are used in German**, especially with a prefixed verb used in the transitive construction. In particular, the prefix ***be*** - (see **20.5.1**) is often used to make transitive verbs from intransitive verbs, but other prefixes (e.g. *er* - and *ver* -) can sometimes have this function, and there are some pairs of verbs with vowel changes:

answer Sie **beantwortete** die Frage Sie **antwortete**	*She answered the question* *She answered*
climb Ich **bestieg** den Berg Ich **erstieg** den Berg Die Maschine **stieg**	*I climbed the mountain* *I climbed the mountain (to the top)* *The plane climbed*
drown Man **ertränkte** die Hexe Die Matrosen **ertranken**	*The witch was drowned* *The sailors drowned*
sink Wir **versenkten** das Schiff Das Schiff **sank**	*We sank the ship* *The ship sank*
sit Sie **setzt** sich auf den Stuhl Sie **sitzt** auf dem Stuhl	*She sits down on the chair* *She is sitting on the chair*

(iii) **Some transitive German verbs can be used reflexively** as the equivalent of the English verb used intransitively:

change Das hat nichts **geändert** Das hat **sich geändert**	*That has changed nothing* *That has changed*
feel Sie **fühlte** etwas unter ihren Füßen Sie **fühlte sich** unwohl	*She felt something under her feet* *She felt unwell*
open (see also **(i)** above) Ich **öffnete**	*I opened the door*

die Tür Die Tür **öffnete sich**	*The door opened*
turn Ich **drehte** das Rad Das Rad **drehte sich**	*I turned the wheel* *The wheel turned*

(iv) A construction with ***lassen* and an intransitive verb** can correspond to the English transitive verb. For this 'causative' use of *lassen*, see **11.3.1c**:

drop Ich **ließ** den Stein **fallen** Der Stein **fiel**	*I dropped the stone* *The stone dropped*
fail Sie **haben** den Kandidaten **durchfallen lassen** Der Kandidat **ist durchgefallen**	*They failed the candidate* *The candidate failed*
run Ich **habe** das Wasser in die Badewanne **laufen lassen** Der Wasserhahn **läuft**	*I've run the bathwater* *The tap's running*

(v) A construction with ***sich lassen* and a German transitive verb** sometimes corresponds to the intransitive use of the verb in English. For this construction with *sich lassen*, see **13.4.6**:

cut Sie **hat** das Papier **geschnitten**	*She cut the paper*
Das Papier **lässt sich schneiden**	*The paper cuts easily*

(b) Some German transitive verbs have English equivalents with different constructions

i.e. the closest English equivalents are not transitive verbs but have other constructions, e.g.:

etwas beantragen	*to apply for sth.*
jdn. beerben	to inherit from sb.
etwas bezahlen	to pay for sth.
etwas dauert mich	I regret sth.

etwas ekelt mich (see also **16.2.2**)	I am disgusted at sth.
etwas freut mich	I am pleased/glad about sth.
jdn./etwas fürchten	*to be afraid of sb./sth.*

16.3.5 Reflexive verbs

Many German verbs are always used with a reflexive pronoun in the accusative case (see **3.2**), e.g. *sich beeilen* 'hurry', *sich erkälten* 'catch a cold'. These **REFLEXIVE VERBS** have no direct equivalent in English – reflexive pronouns like 'myself' in English are used in a quite different way – and they can correspond to a variety of English verb constructions and verb types.

Some German reflexive verbs have English equivalents quite different from the simple verb (and the English equivalent is often an intransitive verb), e.g. *sich setzen* 'sit down' (cf. *setzen* 'put'), etc., see **16.3.4a**. In some instances the nearest English equivalent is a passive (or passive-like) construction (see **13.4.3**).

Many verbs used with a reflexive accusative also have other complements, e.g. a dative, genitive or prepositional object. They are treated in the sections dealing with these other complements. Some verbs have a reflexive object in the dative case rather than the accusative and these are explained in section **16.4.3**.

It is helpful to distinguish two types of reflexive verb in German:

(c) 'True' reflexive verbs, which are only used with a reflexive pronoun

With these, the reflexive pronoun is an integral part of the verb:

sich bedanken	*say 'thank you'*	sich erholen	*recover*
sich beeilen	hurry	sich erkälten	catch a cold
sich befinden	be (situated)	sich irren	be mistaken

sich benehmen	behave	sich	say ‘goodbye’
sich eignen	be suited	verabschieden	bow
sich entschließen	*decide*	sich verneigen	*refuse*
		sich weigern	

(d) Other transitive verbs used reflexively

With these the usual direct object appears as a reflexive pronoun.

(i) Many transitive verbs can be used with a reflexive pronoun. The agent is then performing the action on him-/herself. Compare:

non-reflexive	**reflexive**
Das habe ich **meinen Bruder** gefragt	Das habe ich **mich** gefragt
Ich setzte **den Koffer** auf den Stuhl	Ich setzte **mich** auf den Stuhl
Ich habe **den Hund** gewaschen	Ich habe **mich** gewaschen
Ich habe **ihn** nicht überzeugen können	Ich habe **mich** nicht überzeugen können

(ii) Many transitive verbs denoting activities and accomplishments can be used reflexively with a subject which is not the person carrying out the action. These typically correspond to English passive constructions:

Das **erklärt sich** leicht *That is easily explained*

Mein Verdacht **hat sich bestätigt** *My suspicions were confirmed*

Intransitive verbs denoting activities and accomplishments can also be used in a similar way with a reflexive pronoun. These constructions are always impersonal and have a sense similar to a construction with *man* (see also **13.4.3**).

Dort **wohnt** es **sich** gut *One can live well there*

Hier **arbeitet** es **sich** bequem *One can work comfortably here*

(iii) A few verbs have reflexive and non-reflexive forms where the

reflexive variant is a 'true' reflexive, with a slightly different meaning, see also **16.3.4a**:

Das erinnert mich an etwas	*That reminds me of something*
Ich erinnere mich an etwas	*I remember something*
Das habe ich ihr versprochen	*I promised her that*
Ich habe mich versprochen	*I made a slip of the tongue*

16.4 The dative object

A **DATIVE OBJECT** occurs in three main sentence patterns:

together with an **accusative object**:	Maria hat **ihrem Freund** den Reiseführer geliehen
as the **sole object** of a verb:	Maria hat **ihrer Schwester** geholfen
together with a **prepositional object**:	Maria hat **Ihrer Mutter** für das Geschenk gedankt

The **prepositional objects** used with a dative object are treated in **16.5**. There are also verbs with a **reflexive object** in the dative case, and these are explained in **16.4.3**. As explained in **13.1.3**, a dative object can never be converted into the subject of a corresponding passive sentence.

Besides dative objects, there are also 'free' datives and possessive datives, which are not grammatical requirements of particular verbs in the way that dative objects are. These are explained in section **2.5.2**.

16.4.1 Verbs governing a dative and an accusative object

These are transitive verbs with two complements, i.e. a **direct object** in the accusative case, which is usually a thing, and a dative object, called

the **indirect object**, which is usually a person. It is helpful to remember them as ***einem etwas* verbs**.

The German dative commonly corresponds to an English indirect object, e.g. *He gave* **his uncle** *the money*, or an English prepositional phrase with 'to', e.g. *He gave the money* **to his uncle**.

In German, the indirect object is **always indicated by the dative case**, **never by a preposition**: *Er gab* **seinem Onkel** *das Geld.*

With many verbs (e.g. *geben*) the dative object is necessary for a grammatical sentence, with others (e.g. *beweisen*) it can be dropped in appropriate contexts.

(a) Verbs of giving and taking (in the widest sense) govern a dative and an accusative object

There are a large number of such verbs:

Sie haben **mir eine Stelle** angeboten	*They offered me a job*
Das wollte er (**mir**) beweisen	He wanted to prove that (to me)
Er brachte (**ihr**) **einen Blumenstrauß**	He brought (her) a bunch of flowers
Ich kann (**dir**) **diesen Roman** empfehlen	I can recommend this novel (to you)
Er hat **dem Lehrer einen Bleistift** gegeben	He gave the teacher a pencil
Sie will **mir** jetzt **etwas Ruhe** gönnen	She is now willing to let me have some peace and quiet
Kannst du **mir hundert Franken** leihen?	Can you lend me a hundred francs?
Wir haben (**ihr**) **die Tasche** genommen	We took the bag (from her)
Ich habe (**ihr**) **das Paket** geschickt	I've sent (her) the parcel
Du schuldest **mir** noch **hundert**	You still owe me a hundred euros
	He sold (me) his old Golf
	He showed her his etchings

	Euro
Er verkaufte (**mir**) **seinen alten**	
	Golf
Er zeigte **ihr seine Kupferstiche**	

(b) Most verbs involving an act of speaking are used with a dative and an accusative object

(i) With most of these verbs the accusative object can only be either a neuter or indefinite pronoun (e.g. *es, das, etwas, nichts*) or a clause (a subordinate clause introduced by *dass, ob* etc., or an infinitive clause). The equivalent English verbs often have quite different constructions:

Sie hat (**mir**) geantwortet, dass sie morgen kommen wollte	*She answered me, and said she was going to come tomorrow*
Wer hat (**dir**) befohlen, die Geiseln zu erschießen?	Who gave (you) the order to shoot the hostages?
Das habe ich **ihm** schon gestern erzählt	I already told him that yesterday
Er hat **mir** geraten, mein Haus zu verkaufen	He advised me to sell my house
Er versicherte **mir**, dass er alles erledigt hätte	He assured me he had taken care of everything
Das wird er (**dir**) nie verzeihen können	*He'll never be able to forgive you that*

With ***antworten***, the dative is only used for persons, cf. *Er hat* **auf** *meinen Brief*, **auf** *meine Frage geantwortet.*

sagen is normally used in this way, with a dative of the person if required:

Was wollen Sie (ihm) sagen?	*What do you want to say (to him)?*
Sie sagte mir, dass sie es auf keinen Fall machen würde	*She told me that on no account would she do that*

However, it is used with *zu* when introducing direct speech, or for persons addressing themselves:

„Nun komm doch!" sagte sie zu Christian	*'Come along now', she said to Christian*
„Wie kannst du das nur machen?", sagte er zu sich selbst	*'How on earth can you do that?', he said to himself*

(ii) With a few verbs the accusative object or the dative object can be omitted, as the context requires. This is not possible with all the nearest equivalent verbs in English:

Die iranische Regierung erlaubte (der Delegation) die Einreise	*The Iranian government allowed the delegation into the country*
Sie hat mir (einen langen Brief) geschrieben	She wrote me (a long letter)
Hat sie dir gestern gemailt?	Did she e-mail you yesterday?
Das hat sie mir vorhin gesimst	*She texted me that just now*

(iii) ***glauben*** has a dative of the person and/or an accusative of the thing:

Er glaubt **dem Lehrer**

Er glaubt **jedes Wort**

Er glaubt **dem Lehrer jedes Wort**

glauben **an** (acc.) (see **16.6.2b**), is used for 'believe **in**': *Ich **glaube an** seinen Erfolg.*

(c) Differences between German *einem etwas* constructions and English

Some German verbs have indirect and direct objects and this differs from the construction used with the nearest equivalent English verb:

Man merkt ihm die Anstrengung an	*One notices the effort he's making*
Sie fügte es dem Brief bei	She enclosed it with the letter
Das hat ihm das Studium ermöglicht/ erschwert	That made it possible/difficult for him to study
Das hat sie mir gestern mitgeteilt	She informed me of that yesterday
Die Polizei konnte ihm nichts nachweisen	The police couldn't prove anything against him
Das hat sie mir aber verschwiegen	She didn't tell me about that, though
Das hätte ich ihr nicht zugetraut	*I wouldn't have believed her capable of that*

(d) Verbs of sending or transferring

With verbs of sending or transferring, a phrase with *an* is often used instead of a noun phrase in the dative. The effect is to emphasize the recipient more strongly:

Ich habe ein Paket **an meinen Vater** geschickt

Ich habe einen Brief **an deinen Vater** geschrieben

Sie hat den alten Audi **an ihren Vater** verkauft

(e) A few reflexive verbs have a dative object

With these the reflexive pronoun is the accusative object:

Sie mussten sich **dem Feind** ergeben *They had to surrender to the enemy*

Sie näherten sich **der Stadt** *They approached the city*

16.4.2 Verbs governing the dative

A fair number of German verbs have a dative object, but no accusative object.

These have no direct equivalent in English. No general rules can be given as to which verbs govern a dative object, but it is helpful to be aware that these dative objects often relate to persons who are advantaged or disadvantaged in some way through the action expressed by the verb.

(a) Common verbs which govern a dative object

abraten *advise against* Sie hat **ihm** davon abgeraten	*She advised him against it*
ähneln *resemble, look like* Er ähnelt **seinem Bruder**	*He looks like his brother*
applaudieren *applaud* Sie applaudierten **dem Solisten**	*They applauded the soloist*
ausweichen *get out of the way of, evade, avoid* Er ist **der Gefahr** ausgewichen	*He avoided the danger*
begegnen *meet* (by chance) Ich bin **ihr** in der Stadt begegnet	*I met her in town*
***bekommen** *agree with one* (of food) Fleisch bekommt **mir** nicht	*Meat doesn't agree with me*
danken *thank* Ich dankte **ihnen** sehr dafür	*I thanked them very much for it*
dienen *serve* Er diente **dem König von Italien**	*He served the king of Italy*
drohen *threaten* Sie drohte **ihm** mit einem Stock	
einfallen *occur* Das ist **mir** nicht eingefallen	
erliegen *succumb to* Er **erlag** seinen Wunden	
folgen *follow* Er ist **ihr** ins Exil gefolgt	

gehorchen *obey* Sie gehorcht **ihrem Vater**

***gehören** *belong* Der Mercedes gehört **mir** nicht

gelten *be meant for, be aimed at, be for* Gilt diese Bemerkung **mir** ? Der Beifall galt **den Schauspielern**

gleichen *be equal to, resemble* Jeder Tag glich **dem anderen**

gratulieren *congratulate* Sie haben **ihr** zum Geburtstag gratuliert

helfen *help* Er half **seinem Vater** in der Küche

imponieren *impress* Sie hat **ihm** sehr imponiert

* **kündigen** *fire, give notice* Der Chef hat **ihm** gestern gekündigt

misstrauen *distrust, not trust* Sie misstraut **den Politikern**

nutzen/nützen *be of use* Das nutzt **mir** doch gar nichts

* **passen** *suit* Das neue Kleid passt **dir** gut

schaden *harm* Rauchen schadet **der Gesundheit**

schmeicheln *flatter* Der Student wollte **dem Professor** schmeicheln

trauen *trust* Ich traute **meinen Augen** nicht

trotzen *defy* Er trotzte **der Gefahr**

unterliegen *be defeated by, be subject to* Er unterlag **seinem Gegner**

vertrauen *have trust in* **jdm**. blind vertrauen

wehtun *hurt* Der Wespenstich hat **ihm** wehgetan

She threatened him with a stick
That didn't occur to me
He succumbed to his injuries
He followed her into exile
She obeys her father
The Mercedes doesn't belong to me
Is that comment meant for me?
The applause was for the actors
One day was like the next
They congratulated her on her birthday
He helped his father in the kitchen
She impressed him a lot
The boss gave him notice yesterday
She doesn't trust politicians
But that's no use to me
The new dress suits you
Smoking is harmful to your health
The student wanted to flatter the professor
I couldn't believe my eyes
He defied/braved the danger
He lost to his opponent
have a blind trust in somebody
The wasp sting hurt him

The asterisked verbs are also used in other constructions, often with a different meaning. For example, *bekommen* with an accusative object means 'receive': *Er bekam* **einen langen Brief** *von seinem Vater.*

(b) Most verbs with the meaning 'happen', 'occur' govern a dative

Es wird **dir** doch nichts geschehen — *But nothing will happen to you*

Was ist **ihm** gestern passiert? — *What happened to him yesterday?*

So etwas ist **mir** noch nie vorgekommen *Nothing like that has ever happened to me*

Similarly: *bevorstehen, widerfahren, zustoßen*, etc.

(c) Verbs with certain prefixes usually take a dative

in particular those with ***bei*** -, ***ent***, ***entgegen*** -, ***nach*** -, ***wider*** -, ***zu*** -:

Er ist **der SPD** beigetreten *He joined the SPD*

Das entsprach **meinen Erwartungen** *That came up to my expectations*

Sie kam **mir** entgegen *She came towards me*

Er eilte **ihr** nach *He hurried after her*

Das Kind widersprach **seiner Mutter** *The child contradicted its mother*

Er hat **dem Gespräch** zugehört *He listened to the conversation*

Similarly (among many others):

beistehen	*give support to*	nachlaufen	*run after*
beiwohnen	be present at	nachstellen	follow, pester
entgegengehen	go to meet	nachstreben	emulate
entgegenwirken	counteract	sich widersetzen	oppose
entsagen	renounce	widerstehen	resist
entstammen	originate from	zulaufen	run up to
nachgeben	give way to	zustimmen	agree with
nachkommen	*follow*	zuvorkommen	*anticipate*

All the verbs prefixed with *ent* - meaning 'escape' (*entgehen, entkommen, entrinnen, entwischen*, etc.) also all govern a dative.

A few verbs with these prefixes have a dative and an accusative object, e.g. *jdm. etwas beibringen* 'teach somebody something', *jdm. etwas zutrauen* 'credit somebody with something'.

(d) The dative object of some verbs corresponds to the subject of the usual English equivalent

Etwas fällt mir auf		*I notice something*
Etwas entfällt mir		I forget something
Es fällt mir leicht/ schwer		*I find something easy/ difficult*
Es fehlt, mangelt mir an etwas Etwas fehlt, mangelt mir	}	*I lack something*
Etwas gefällt mir		*I like something*
Etwas geht mir auf		I realize something
Etwas gelingt mir		I succeed in something
Etwas tut mir Leid		I am sorry about something
Das leuchtet mir nicht ein		I don't understand that
Es liegt mir viel an etwas (*dat.*)		I am keen on something
Etwas liegt mir		I fancy something
Das genügt, reicht mir		I have had enough of that
Etwas schmeckt mir		*I like something (i.e. food)*

With these verbs, the dative object tends to come first in main clauses, e.g. ***Mir*** *hat das nicht gefallen.*

16.4.3 Verbs with a dative reflexive pronoun

(a) Many verbs governing a dative can be used with a dative reflexive pronoun

The action then refers back to the subject. Both types of verbs governing the dative can be used in this way, i.e.:

(i) ***einem etwas*** verbs (see **16.4.1**):

Ich erlaubte **mir**, ihm zu widersprechen *I allowed myself to contradict him*

Ich muss **mir** Arbeit verschaffen *I must find work*

Ich habe **mir** zu viel zugemutet *I've taken on too much*

(ii) Verbs with **only a dative object** (see **16.4.2**):

Ich habe **mir** mehrmals widersprochen *I contradicted myself several times*

Du schadest **dir** mit dem Rauchen *You're harming yourself by smoking*

(b) A few other verbs are used with a dative reflexive pronoun

These are 'true' reflexive verbs (see **16.3.5a**), where the reflexive pronoun is an integral part of the verb. All also have an accusative object:

Das habe ich **mir** angeeignet *I acquired that*

Das habe ich **mir** eingebildet *I imagined that*

Das verbitte ich **mir** *I refuse to tolerate that*

Ich habe **mir** vorgenommen, das zu tun *I have resolved to do that*

Das kann ich **mir** gut vorstellen *I can imagine that well*

Ich habe **mir** eine Grippe zugezogen *I contracted flu*

16.5 Prepositional objects

16.5.1 Many verbs have a prepositional object as complement

The PREPOSITION used in PREPOSITIONAL OBJECTS is wholly **idiomatic** and determined by the individual verb. The fact that German has *Ich warte* **auf** *Sie* for English 'I am waiting **for** you', for example, is not related in any way to the usual meaning of the German preposition *auf* or the English preposition 'for'. For this reason, each combination of verb and preposition has to be learned separately and remembered as a whole.

Prepositional objects occur in three main sentence patterns:

• as the **only complement** of a verb: Maria wartet draußen **auf ihre Freundinnen**

• together with a **direct object**: Maria erinnerte **ihren Bruder an sein Versprechen**

• together with a **dative object**: Maria hat **Ihrer Mutter für das Geschenk** gedankt

In addition, there are a few verbs which govern two prepositional objects.

All prepositional objects are treated in this section under the individual prepositions, with other complements governed by the verb indicated as appropriate.

16.5.2 *an*

an is most often followed by the **dative case** in prepositional objects, but a few verbs govern *an* with the accusative.

(a) *an* with the dative case

Prepositional objects with *an* followed by a dative often convey the idea of 'in respect of, in connection with':

Ich erkannte sie **an ihrem knallroten Haar**	*I recognized her by her bright red hair*
Er ist **an einer Lungenentzündung** gestorben	He died of pneumonia
Ich zweifle **an seiner Ehrlichkeit**	*I doubt his honesty*

A selection of other verbs:

arbeiten an *work at*

erkranken an *fall ill with*

Es fehlt mir an etwas *I lack sth.* (see **16.4.2d**)

sich an jdm./etwas freuen *take pleasure in sb./sth.*

gewinnen an (e.g. an Bedeutung gewinnen) *gain (in)*

jdn. an etwas hindern *prevent sb. from (doing) sth.*

leiden an *suffer from*

Es liegt mir viel an etwas *I am very keen on sth.* (see **16.4.2d**)

mitwirken an *play a part in*

sich an etwas orientieren *orientate oneself by sth.*

etwas an jdm. rachen *avenge sth. on sb.*

sich an jdm. fur etwas rachen *take revenge on sb. for sth.*

teilnehmen an *take part in*

verlieren an (e.g. an Boden verlieren) *lose (some)*

sich freuen is used with other prepositions with different meanings, i.e. *auf* (acc.), 'look forward to', see **16.5.3a** and *über*, see **16.5.9**.

(b) *an* with the accusative case

Most of the few verbs which govern a prepositional object with *an* and a following accusative case denote mental processes:

Maria denkt immer **an ihren kleinen Bruder** *Maria is always thinking of her little brother*

Du erinnerst mich **an ihn** *You remind me of him*

Ich erinnere mich **an ihn** *I remember him* (see **16.7.2**)

Ich glaube **an den Fortschritt** *I believe in progress* (see **16.4.1b**)

The other verbs with *an* and an accusative:

sich an etwas halten *stick to sth.* sich an etwas gewöhnen *get used to sth.*

16.5.3 *auf*

auf most often occurs with the **accusative case** in prepositional objects. Very few verbs govern *auf* with the dative.

(a) *auf* with the accusative case is the commonest preposition in prepositional objects

Ich werde **auf deine Kinder** aufpassen *I'll mind your children*

Seine Bemerkung bezog sich **auf dich** *His comment related to you*

Das läuft **auf das Gleiche** hinaus *It amounts to the same thing*

Er wies (mich) **auf die Schwierigkeiten** hin *He pointed the difficulties out (to me)*

A selection of other verbs:

achten auf Acht geben auf	} *pay attention to*	rechnen auf	*count on*
		schwören auf	*swear on/by*
sich berufen auf	*refer to*	sich spezialisieren auf	*specialize in*
drängen auf	*press for*		
sich erstrecken auf	*extend to*	sich stützen auf	*lean, count on*
folgen auf	*follow* (see **16.4.2a**)	sich verlassen auf	*rely on*
sich freuen auf	*look forward to*	sich verstehen auf	*be expert in*
hoffen auf	*hope for*	(jdn.) verweisen auf	*refer (sb.) to*
sich konzentrieren auf	*concentrate on*	verzichten auf	*do without*
		warten auf	*wait for*
pfeifen auf (*coll.*)	*not care less about*	zählen auf	*count on*
pochen auf	*insist on*	zurückkommen auf	*come back to, refer to*
reagieren auf	*react to*		

Es kommt (mir) auf etwas an *sth. matters (to me)*

etwas auf etwas beschränken *limit/restrict/confine sth. to sth.*

sich auf etwas beschränken *limit oneself/be limited to sth.*

etwas auf etwas zurückführen *put sth. down to sth.*

(b) *auf* with the dative case

A few verbs which convey the idea of not moving govern *auf* with the **dative** case:

Er beharrte **auf seiner Meinung** *He didn't shift from his opinion*

Ich bestehe **auf meinem Recht** *I insist on my right*

Similarly: *beruhen auf* (dat.), *fußen auf* (dat.), which both mean 'be based on', 'rest on', but *sich gründen auf* 'be based on', is followed by the accusative, e.g. *Der Vorschlag* **gründet sich auf** *diese Annahme.*

basieren auf, when used intransitively, in the meaning 'be based on' is followed by the dative, e.g. *Das basiert auf genauer Kenntnis dieser Methode.* When used transitively, in the meaning 'base (sth.) on' it can be followed by the dative or the accusative, although the accusative is more frequent, e.g. *Sie basierte ihre Aussage auf zahlreiche Beispiele* (less common: *zahlreichen Beispielen*).

Note *bestehen aus* 'consist of' (**16.5.4**) and *bestehen in* 'consist in'

(**16.5.6b**).

16.5.4 *aus*

aus usually has the meaning 'of', 'from' in prepositional objects.

Ihr Essen bestand **aus trockenem Brot** *Their food consisted of dry bread*

Other verbs:

etwas aus etwas entnehmen, ersehen *infer, gather sth. from sth.*

sich aus etwas ergeben *result from sth.*

etwas aus etwas folgern, schließen *conclude sth. from sth.*

Some of these verbs are used with other prepositions or constructions, often with different meanings:

(i) *bestehen auf* 'insist on' (see **16.5.3b**), *bestehen in* 'consist in' (**16.5.6b**).

(ii) *entnehmen* can alternatively be constructed with a dative, e.g. *Ich entnehme (aus) Ihrem Brief, dass Sie das Geschäft aufgeben wollen.*

(iii) *sich in etwas ergeben* 'submit to sth.' (see **16.5.6a**), *sich jdm./etwas ergeben* 'surrender to sb./sth.' (see **16.4.1e**).

16.5.5 *für*

für usually has the meaning 'for' in prepositional objects.

Ich habe ihm **für seine Mühe** gedankt *I thanked him for his trouble*

Ich habe mich **für den Audi** entschieden *I decided on the Audi*

Ich halte deine Freundin **für hochbegabt** *I consider your friend to be*

very gifted

A selection of other verbs:

sich (bei jdm.) für etwas bedanken *give thanks for sth. (to sb.)*

sich für etwas begeistern *be enthusiastic about sth.*

sich für jdn./etwas eignen *be suitable for sb./sth.*

sich für jdn./etwas interessieren *be interested in sb./sth.*

sich für jdn./etwas schämen *be ashamed of sth./for sb.*

für jdn./etwas sorgen *take care of/look after sb./sth.*

Notes on some of these verbs:

(i) Non-reflexive *interessieren* is used with *für* or *an* (dat.), e.g. *Er interessierte sie für das/an dem Unternehmen.*

(ii) *sich eignen zu/als* means 'be suitable as' (see **16.5.13**).

(iii) *sich* (*wegen*) *jds./etwas schämen* (see **16.7.2**) 'be ashamed of sb./sth.', *sich vor jdm. schämen* 'feel ashamed in front of sb.' (see **16.5.12a**).

(iv) *sich um jdn./etwas sorgen* 'be worried about sb./sth.'

16.5.6 *in*

(a) *in* is most often used with the accusative case in prepositional objects

Sie willigte **in die Scheidung** ein *She agreed to the divorce*

Er verliebte sich **in sie** *He fell in love with her*

A selection of other verbs:

jdn. in etwas einführen *introduce sb. to sth.*

sich ergeben in *submit to* (see **16.5.4**)

sich mischen in *meddle in*

sich vertiefen in *become engrossed in*

(b) Very few verbs govern *in* with the dative case

Meine Aufgabe besteht **in der Erledigung** der Korrespondenz	*My duties consist in dealing with the correspondence*
Ich habe mich nicht **in ihr** getäuscht	*I was not mistaken in (my judgement of) her*

Both these verbs are used with other prepositions with different meanings, i.e. *bestehen auf* 'insist on' (**16.5.3b**), *bestehen aus* 'consist of' (**16.5.4**), *sich täuschen über* 'to be mistaken about' (**16.5.9a**).

16.5.7 *mit*

mit usually has the sense of 'with' in prepositional objects.

Sie hat **mit ihrer Arbeit** angefangen *She made a start on her work*

Willst du bitte **damit** aufhören? *Please stop doing that*

Sie hat ihm **mit der Faust** gedroht *She threatened him with her fist*

Mein Freund simst **mit anderen Frauen** *My boyfriend texts other women*

Ich habe gestern **mit ihm** telefoniert *I spoke to him on the telephone yesterday*

A selection of other verbs:

sich abfinden mit *be satisfied with*

sich befassen mit *deal with*

sich begnügen mit *be satisfied with*

sich beschäftigen mit *occupy oneself with*

rechnen mit *count on*

sprechen mit (*or* jdn. sprechen) *speak to/with*

übereinstimmen mit *agree with*

sich unterhalten mit *converse with*

vergleichen mit *compare with*

sich verheiraten mit *marry*

versehen mit *provide with*

zusammenstoßen mit *collide with*

16.5.8 *nach*

(a) *nach* with verbs of calling, enquiring, longing, reaching, etc.

With these, *nach* typically has the sense of 'after' or 'for':

Haben Sie sich nach seinem Befinden erkundigt?	*Have you enquired how he is?*
Plötzlich griff das Kind nach der Katze	Suddenly the child made a grab for the cat
Sie schrie nach ihrem Cousin	She yelled for her cousin
Ich telefonierte nach einem Arzt	*I rang for a doctor*

A selection of other verbs:

fragen nach	*ask after, for*	streben nach	*strive for*
hungern nach	hunger after, for	suchen nach	search for
rufen nach	call after, for	verlangen nach	*ask, long for; crave*
sich sehnen nach	*long for*		

Two verbs are used with other prepositions with slightly different meanings, i.e. *sich erkundigen über* 'enquire about' and *fragen über* 'ask about' (see **16.5.9**).

(b) *nach* has the sense of English 'of' with verbs of smelling, etc.

Es riecht **nach Teer** *It smells of tar*

Es schmeckte **nach Fisch** *It tasted of fish*

Similarly: *duften nach, stinken nach*, etc., and *Es sieht nach Regen aus* 'It looks like rain'.

16.5.9 *über*

über always governs the **accusative** case in prepositional objects.

(a) *über* corresponds to English 'about' with verbs of saying, etc.

Ich habe mich sehr **über sein Benehmen** geärgert	*I was very annoyed at his behaviour*
Sie musste lange **darüber** nachdenken	She had to think it over for a long time
Ich habe gestern mit dem Chef **über diese Bewerbung** gesprochen	*I talked to the boss about this application yesterday*

Many verbs can be used with *über* in this sense, e.g.:

sich bei jdm. über etwas beklagen/ beschweren	*complain to sb. about sth.*
sich über jdn./etwas freuen	*be pleased about sth.* (see **16.5.2a**, **16.5.3a**)
jdn. über etwas informieren	inform sb. about sth.
über jdn./etwas spotten	mock sb./sth.
sich täuschen über etwas	*be mistaken about sth.* (see **16.5.6b**)
über etwas urteilen	judge sth.
sich über jdn./etwas wundern	*be surprised at sb./sth.*

Some verbs, i.e. *denken, erzählen, hören, lesen, sagen, schreiben, sprechen* and *wissen* can be used with *über* or *von* in the sense of 'about'. *über* tends to refer to something more extensive than *von.* Compare:

Was denken Sie **darüber** ? *What is your view of that?*

Was denken Sie **von ihm** ? *What do you think of him?*

Er wusste viel **über Flugzeuge** *He knew a lot about aeroplanes*

Er wusste nichts **von ihrem Tod** *He knew nothing of her death*

(b) Other verbs governing a prepositional object with *über*

es nicht über sich bringen, etwas zu tun *not bring oneself to do sth.*

sich über etwas hinwegsetzen *disregard sth.*

über etwas verfügen *have sth. at one's disposal*

16.5.10 *um*

um usually has the meaning 'concerning', 'in respect of' in prepositional objects.

Sie hat sich **um ihre Schwester** in Dresden geängstigt	*She was worried about her sister in Dresden*
Es handelte sich **um eine Wette**	It was a question of a bet
Ich kümmerte mich **um meine Enkelkinder**	*I took care of my grandchildren*

A selection of other verbs:

sich um etwas bemühen *take trouble over sth.*

jdn. um etwas beneiden *envy sb. sth.*

jdn. um etwas betrügen *cheat sb. out of sth.*

jdn. um etwas bitten, ersuchen (*elev.*) *ask sb. for sth., request sth. from sb.*

jdn. um etwas bringen *make sb. lose sth.*

Es geht um etwas (see **16.2.4g**) *Something is at stake*

um etwas kommen *lose sth., be deprived of sth.*

sich um jdn./etwas sorgen *be worried about sth.*

sich um/über etwas streiten *argue about/over sth.*

Note, with a different preposition and a different meaning *sich ängstigen vor* 'be afraid of' (**16.5.12**).

16.5.11 *von*

von usually has the sense of English 'of' or 'from' in prepositional objects.

Ich will dich nicht **von der Arbeit** abhalten	*I don't want to keep you from your work*
Wir müssen **davon** ausgehen, dass …	We must start by assuming that …
	I have to dissociate myself from my

Ich muss mich **von meinem Kollegen** distanzieren	colleague
Das Kind träumte **von einer schönen Prinzessin**	*The child was dreaming of a beautiful princess*

A selection of other verbs:

etwas hängt von jdm./etwas ab	*sth. depends on sb./sth.*
jdm. von etwas abraten	*advise sb. against sth.*
von etwas absehen	*refrain from sth., disregard sth.*
jdn. von etwas befreien	*liberate sb. from sth.*
sich von etwas erholen	*recover from sth.*
von etwas herrühren	*stem from sth.*
jdn. von etwas überzeugen	*convince sb. of sth.*
jdn. von etwas verständigen	*inform sb. of sth.*
von etwas zeugen	*show, demonstrate sth.*

16.5.12 *vor*

vor is always used with the **dative** case in prepositional objects.

vor often corresponds to English 'of' with verbs of fearing, etc.

Ich ekele mich **vor diesen großen Spinnen**	*I have a horror of these big spiders* (see **16.2.2**)
Er fürchtete sich **vor dem Rottweiler**	He was afraid of the Rottweiler
Er warnte mich **vor dem Treibsand**	*He warned me about the quicksand*

A selection of other verbs:

sich vor jdm./etwas ängstigen	*be afraid of sb./sth.* (see **16.5.10**)
Angst vor jdm./etwas haben	be afraid, scared of sb./sth.
sich vor etwas drücken (*coll.*)	dodge sth.
vor jdm./etwas erschrecken	be scared by sb./sth.
sich vor jdm./etwas hüten	beware of sb./sth., be on one's guard against sb./sth.
sich vor jdm. schämen	*feel ashamed in front of sb.* (see **16.5.5**)
sich vor etwas scheuen	*be afraid of, shrink from sth.*

vor often corresponds to English 'from' with verbs of protecting, etc.

Sie bewahrte ihn **vor der Gefahr** *She protected him from danger*

Sie flohen **vor der Polizei** *They fled from the police*

A selection of other verbs:

jdn. vor jdm./etwas beschützen	*protect sb. from sb./sth.*
jdn. vor etwas retten	save sb. from sth.
sich vor jdm./etwas verbergen	*hide from sb./sth.*

16.5.13 *zu*

(a) *zu* often corresponds to English '(in)to'

This is especially frequent with verbs of empowering, leading, persuading, etc. All these verbs are transitive, i.e. they have an accusative object besides the prepositional object with *zu*:

Er ermutigte sie **zum Widerstand** *He encouraged them to resist*

Er trieb sie **zur Verzweiflung** *He drove her to despair*

Er überredete mich **zu einem Glas Wein** *He talked me into having a glass of wine*

Er zwang mich **zu einer Entscheidung** *He forced me into a decision*

A selection of other verbs used similarly:

autorisieren	*authorize*	nötigen	*invite*
berechtigen	entitle	provozieren	provoke
bewegen	induce	raten	advise
einladen	invite	veranlassen	cause
ermächtigen	empower	verführen	seduce
herausfordern	*challenge*	verhelfen	*help*

(b) Some other verbs have a prepositional object with *zu*

Das hat **zu seinem Erfolg** sehr beigetragen *That contributed a lot to his success*

Sie entschloss sich **zur Teilnahme** *She decided to take part*

Ich rechne/zähle ihn **zu meinen Freunden** *I count him among my friends*

A selection of other verbs:

es zu etwas bringen *attain sth.* (see **3.6.2h**)

zu etwas dienen *serve as sth.*

sich zu etwas eignen *be suitable as sth.* (see **16.5.5**)

zu etwas führen *lead to sth.*

zu etwas gehören *be part of sth., be one of sth.* (see **16.4.2a**)

jdm. zu etwas gratulieren *congratulate sb. on sth.*

zu etwas neigen *tend to sth.*

zu jdm./etwas passen *go with sb./sth.* (see **16.4.2a**)

sich zu etwas verhalten *stand in a relationship to sth.*

16.5.14 Prepositional objects in the form of a clause

If a prepositional object is in the form of a clause it is frequently anticipated by a prepositional adverb, i.e. the form ***da*** (***r*** **) + preposition**, see **3.5**. The prepositional object can be a subordinate clause (usually introduced by *dass*), or an infinitive clause with *zu*, for example:

Sie hat ihm **dafür** gedankt, **dass er ihr geholfen hatte**

Ich verlasse mich **darauf**, **dass er alles arrangiert**

Er hinderte mich **daran**, **den Brief zu schreiben**

Ich verlasse mich **darauf**, **ihn zu Hause zu finden**

The prepositional adverb is optional with some verbs, e.g.:

Ich ärgerte mich (**darüber**), dass er so wenig getan hatte

Sie haben (**damit**) angefangen, die Ernte hereinzubringen

There are no precise rules for contexts when the prepositional adverb is used or not, and it is often left out with some common verbs. If it is used, it tends to emphasize the following clause more strongly. In general, it is more commonly included than omitted in written German (and it is never incorrect to include it), whilst omission is more typical of everyday speech.

The following list gives some common verbs with which the prepositional adverb is often left out:

abhalten von	sich ekeln vor	raten zu
abraten von	sich entscheiden für	sich scheuen vor
Acht geben auf	sich entschließen zu	sich schämen über
anfangen mit	sich erinnern an	sich sehnen nach
(sich) ärgern über	fragen nach	sorgen für
aufhören mit	sich freuen auf/über	sich sorgen um
aufpassen auf	sich fürchten vor	sich streiten über
beginnen mit	glauben an	träumen von
sich beklagen über	hindern an	überzeugen von
sich bemühen um	hoffen auf	urteilen über
sich beschweren über	sich hüten vor	sich wundern über
bitten um	klagen über	zweifeln an

In addition, the prepositional adverb can be omitted with all the transitive verbs used with *zu* (see **16.5.13a**).

16.6 Predicate complements

16.6.1 Predicate complements with copular verbs

PREDICATE COMPLEMENTS are used with very few verbs, but these are common and important, like *sein* and *werden*. These verbs typically have a **noun phrase** or an **adjective** with them which describes the subject in some way:

Er ist **mein Freund** Das scheint mir **ratsam**

Das Buch ist **langweilig** Er wurde **Katholik**

Sie ist **blass** geworden Du bist ganz **der Alte** geblieben

These verbs are known as COPULAR (i.e. 'linking') verbs, because the verb simply links the subject with the noun phrase or adjective which makes up the predicate complement. We can see this by comparing the following sentences:

Holger fährt einen Bus *Holger drives a bus*

Holger ist Busfahrer *Holger is a bus driver*

In the first sentence, *Holger* and *Bus* refer to clearly different things, but in the second *Holger* and *Busfahrer* refer to one and the same person. Because the complement simply describes the subject, it is **in the nominative case** if it is a noun.

The following verbs are used with a predicate complement:

bleiben	*remain*	sein	*be*	scheinen	*seem*
heißen	*be called*	werden	*become*		

werden is used in two sentence patterns. When used with a predicate complement, it has the meaning 'become' and is typically used with nouns denoting professions and beliefs, etc. (e.g. *Er wurde Katholik, Kommunist; Sie werden Soldaten*). When used with a prepositional object introduced by *zu*, it means 'change, develop, turn into':

Die Felder waren **zu Seen** geworden *The fields had turned into lakes*

Das ist mir **zur Gewohnheit** geworden *That has become a habit of mine*

Es wurde **zur Mode** *It became a fashion*

Er wurde **zum Verbrecher** *He became a criminal*

The verbs *bleiben* and *sein* can also be used with place complements (see **16.8**), e.g. *Wir bleiben/sind heute in der Schule.*

16.6.2 Predicate complements in the accusative case

A few **transitive verbs** have a PREDICATE COMPLEMENT in the accusative. This is not a second accusative object, as with the verbs dealt with in **16.3.3**, but an additional element which relates back to the accusative object, describing or identifying it:

Er nannte **mich einen Lügner**	*He called me a liar*

This construction is only used in German with verbs of calling, i.e. ***heißen***, ***nennen*** and ***schimpfen***.

A similar construction is possible with more verbs in English than in German. The German equivalents of these most often have a phrase with *als* in apposition (see **2.6**), or a prepositional complement, usually with *zu*, although some verbs select other prepositions:

Ich sehe es **als eine Schande** an	*I consider it a shame*
Er erwies sich **als Feigling**	He proved himself a coward
Er machte sie **zu seiner Frau**	He made her his wife
Man erklärte ihn **zum Verräter**	He was declared a traitor
Wir hielten ihn **für einen Idioten**	*We considered/thought him an idiot*

16.7 Genitive objects

A small number of verbs have an **object in the genitive case**. With a very few this is the only object, i.e. they are intransitive verbs with no accusative object. Others are transitive verbs with an accusative object and a genitive object. Many of the latter are reflexive verbs.

All these verbs are restricted to formal or specialized registers and most are nowadays uncommon. A few more are used only in set phrases. In the following lists of verbs which are still used with a genitive, the more usual alternatives are given wherever possible.

16.7.1 Verbs with a genitive as the only object

bedürfen *need, require* (more common: *brauchen, benötige n*)

Die Ursache des Unfalls bedarf	*The cause of the accident requires*

weiterer Ermittlungen (*SZ*)	*further investigation*

entbehren *lack* (more commonly used with an accusative object)

Der Staat konnte **eines kraftvollen Monarchen** nicht entbehren (*v. Rimscha*)	*The state could not do without a powerful monarch*

ermangeln *lack* (more usual *fehlen*, see **16.4.2d**)

Sein Vortrag ermangelte **jeglicher Sachkenntnis**	*His lecture was lacking in any kind of knowledge of the subject*

gedenken *remember* (elev. for *denken an* (acc.), usually with reference to the dead)

Der Bundespräsident gedachte **der Opfer** des Nationalsozialismus	*The Federal President remembered the victims of National Socialism*

harren *await* (elev. for *warten auf* (acc.); has a biblical ring)

Wir harren **einer Antwort** (*Zeit*)	*We are awaiting an answer*

16.7.2 Reflexive verbs with a genitive object

Most of these are 'true' reflexive verbs, with an accusative reflexive pronoun (see **16.3.5**):

sich annehmen *look after, take care of* (more usual: *sich kümmern um*)	
Er hätte sich **dieses Kindes** angenommen (*Walser*)	*He would have looked after that child*
sich bedienen *use* (more usual:	

***benutzen, gebrauchen, verwenden*)**

Die Firma bediente sich nur **schmutziger Schiffe** (*Böll*)

The firm only used dirty ships

sich bemächtigen *seize* (various alternatives, e.g. *ergreifen, nehmen*)

Sie bemächtigten sich **des Bürgermeisters** von Le Mans (*Zeit*)

They seized the mayor of Le Mans

sich entsinnen *remember* (more usual: *sich erinnern an* (acc.), see 16.5.2b)

Ich entsann mich **des Anblicks** der langgestreckten Baracken (*Andersch*)

I remembered the sight of the long huts

sich erfreuen *enjoy* (more usual: *genießen, sich freuen über* (acc.))

Sie erfreuten sich **des schönen Sommerwetters** (*OH*)

They were enjoying the fine summer weather

sich erinnern *remember* (more usual: *sich erinnern an* (acc.), see 16.5.2b)

Ich erinnere mich **bestimmter Details** noch (*Böll*)

I still remember certain details

sich erwehren *refrain from* (more usual: *abwehren*)

Ich konnte mich **eines Lächelns** kaum erwehren

I could scarcely refrain from a smile

sich rühmen *boast about/of* (more usual: *stolz sein über*)

Die meisten Länder Europas rühmen sich **einer tausendjährigen Geschichte** (*Haffner*)

Most European countries can boast of a thousand years of history

sich schämen *be ashamed of* (more usual: *sich schämen für/*

***wegen*, see 16.5.5)**	
Er schämte sich **seines Betragens**	*He was ashamed of his behaviour*
sich vergewissern *make sure* (more usual: *nachprüfen, überprüfen*)	
Sie vergewisserte sich **der Zuverlässigkeit** dieses Mannes	*She made sure about this man's reliability*

16.7.3 Verbs used with a genitive and an accusative object

anklagen *accuse* (outside formal legal parlance: *anklagen wegen*)

Man klagte ihn der fahrlässigen Tötung an	*He was accused of manslaughter through culpable negligence*

berauben *rob* (more commonly: *einem etwas rauben*)

Er beraubte ihn der Freiheit	*He robbed him of his freedom*

versichern *assure* (more commonly: *einem etwas zusichern*)

Ich versichere Sie meines uneingeschränkten Vertrauens	*I assure you of my absolute trust*

The following verbs are used with a genitive in legal language, but with a following clause in non-specialized registers:

jdn. einer Sache beschuldigen/bezichtigen	*accuse sb. of sth.*
jdn. einer Sache überführen	*convict sb. of sth.*
jdn. einer Sache verdächtigen	*suspect sb. of sth.*

16.7.4 Set phrases with a genitive object

Many more verbs were used with a genitive object in older German, and some of these still occur in idiomatic phrases, although they, too, are mainly used in formal writing:

der Gefahr nicht **achten** *pay no heed to danger*

jdn. eines Besseren **belehren** *teach someone better*

sich eines Besseren **besinnen** *think better of something*

jeder Beschreibung **spotten** *beggar description*

jdn. des Landes **verweisen** *expel someone from a country*

seines Amtes **walten** *discharge one's duties*

jdn. keines Blickes **würdigen** *not to deign to look at someone*

16.8 Locative complements

Verbs involving movement typically have a phrase with them indicating the **direction of movement** or the **destination**, and verbs referring to **position** have a phrase to say **where** the relevant person or thing **is located**.

Such phrases are complements of the verb because even if they can often be omitted, they are implicit in the meaning of the verb, as explained in **16.1.4**. It is convenient to take both these DIRECTION COMPLEMENTS and PLACE COMPLEMENTS together under the general heading of LOCATIVE COMPLEMENTS.

It is important to understand that **locative complements differ from adverbials**, which are much more loosely connected with the verb. This difference is particularly important in respect of word order, see **19.7.1**.

16.8.1 Direction complements

Most verbs expressing motion can occur with a **direction complement**, typically a phrase which indicates where someone or something is moving. Direction complements usually take the form of a prepositional phrase or an equivalent word. It can be omitted with many verbs.

Some verbs of motion – typically verbs of coming and going – are **intransitive** and only have a direction complement with them:

Gestern ist sie **nach Italien** gefahren

Der Junge fiel **hinein**

Other verbs of motion – typically verbs which express the action of putting something somewhere – are **transitive** and have an accusative object as well as the direction complement:

Ich warf den Ball **dorthin**

Sie legte das Buch **auf den Tisch**

16.8.2 Place complements

Some verbs indicating position require a **place complement**, a word or phrase to denote where someone or something is located, e.g.:

Sie hat lange **in der Pfeilgasse** gewohnt *She lived a long time in the Pfeilgasse*

Der Brief befand sich **dort** *The letter was there*

Nach der Party hat er **bei ihr** übernachtet *He spent the night with her after the party*

Sie hielt sich **in Hamm** auf *She stayed in Hamm*

These phrases are similar to direction complements with verbs of

motion because they are closely linked to the meaning of the verb, and in practice the sentences would be ungrammatical if they were omitted. Common verbs with place complements are:

sich aufhalten	*stay*	liegen	*lie, be lying*	stehen	*stand*
bleiben	*stay, remain*	parken	*park*	sich verlieren	*get lost*
hängen	*hang*	sitzen	*sit*	wohnen	*live, dwell*
leben	*live*	stattfinden	*take place*	zelten	*camp*

Conjunctions and subordination

CONJUNCTIONS are words used to **link clauses within a sentence**. There are **two kinds of clause** in English and German:

• MAIN CLAUSES (German *Hauptsätze*) are **independent**, and they are characterized in German by the fact that the **finite verb** in them is in **second position** (see **19.1.1a**), e.g.:

Mein Bruder **fährt** morgen mit dem ICE nach Bochum

An dem Abend **fiel** der Meteor auf die Erde

• SUBORDINATE CLAUSES (G erman *Nebensätze*) are **embedded** within another clause and **dependent** on it. The **finite verb** in them in German is in **final position** (see **19.1.1c**), e.g.:

Ich weiß, **dass** mein Bruder morgen nach Bochum **fährt**

Wir sahen im Fernsehen, **wie** der Meteor an dem Abend auf die Erde **fiel**

If a sentence contains **more than one clause**, the clauses can be linked in two ways:

• COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS like ***und*** or ***aber*** link **parallel clauses of equal status**. If both are **main clauses**, the verb is in second position in both:

Er ist gestern Abend gekommen, **aber** ich **habe** ihn noch nicht gesehen

Coordinating conjunctions can also join subordinate clauses. The verb

is then in final position in both:

> Ich weiß, **dass** sie morgen **kommt und** dass sie mich sehen **möchte**

• SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS like ***dass*** or ***wenn*** introduce **subordinate clauses**:

Ich bringe dir das Buch, **wenn** ich morgen **vorbeikomme**

Subordinate clauses depend on **another clause**, and there are **three main types of subordinate clause**, which differ in their function in the clause they are part of:

• NOUN CLAUSES function like noun phrases, for example as the subject or object of a verb, e.g.:

Ich weiß, **dass sie morgen kommt**

As they are typically complements of the verb they are sometimes called COMPLEMENT CLAUSES, see **16.3.2**.

• ADJECTIVAL CLAUSES have the function of adjectives, e.g.:

die Frau, **die morgen kommt**

They are introduced by a relative pronoun, see **5.4**, and are often called RELATIVE CLAUSES.

• ADVERBIAL CLAUSES have the same function as adverbs, i.e. they indicate time, cause, manner, etc., e.g. (for time):

Die Frau kam, **als die Sonne aufging**

They can be classified according to their meaning like adverbs (see **Table 7.1**).

This chapter gives details about the conjunctions of German, as follows:

• **Coordinating conjunctions** – *und*, *aber*, *oder*, etc. (section **17.1**)

• **Noun clauses** – *dass*, *ob*, etc. (section **17.2**)

• **Adverbial clauses**

• Conjunctions of **time** – *als*, *wenn*, etc. (section **17.3**)

• **Causal** conjunctions – *weil*, *da*, etc. (section **17.4**)

• Conjunctions of **purpose** and **result** – *damit*, *so dass*, etc. (section **17.5**)

• **Concessive** conjunctions – *obwohl*, etc. (section **17.6**)

• Conjunctions of **manner** and **degree** – *indem*, *ohne dass*, etc. (section **17.7**)

Relative pronouns and **relative clauses** are dealt with in section **5.4**.

Conjunctions used to introduce **conditional clauses** (= 'if') are dealt with in section **14.3**.

17.1 Coordinating conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions link clauses of the same kind. As shown in the introduction to this chapter they can link main or subordinate clauses, but most of them can also link single words or phrases:

> Ich finde dieses Blu-ray Gerät schön, **aber** etwas teuer
>
> Sie hat ein Buch **und** zwei Zeitschriften gekauft

A few, like ***sowie***, are only used like this, i.e. they cannot link clauses.

Table 17.1 lists the coordinating conjunctions of German, with the section indicated in which their use is explained.

Table 17.1 Coordinating conjunctions

aber	but	**17.1.1**	**nämlich**	as, for	**17.1.2**
allein	but	**17.1.1**	**oder**	or	**17.1.3**
bald … bald	now … now	**17.1.5**	**sondern**	but	**17.1.1**
beziehungsweise	or	**17.1.3**	**sowie**	as well as	**17.1.4**
denn	as, for	**17.1.2**	**sowohl … als**	as well as	**17.1.4**
doch	but	**17.1.1**	**teils … teils**	partly … partly	**17.1.5**
entweder … oder	either … or	**17.1.3**	**und**	and	**17.1.4**
jedoch	but	**17.1.1**	**weder … noch**	neither … nor	**17.1.3**

17.1.1 *aber, allein, doch, jedoch, sondern*

These conjunctions all indicate restrictions of some kind and can correspond to English ***but***.

(a) *aber* is the usual equivalent of English 'but'

Er runzelte die Stirn, **aber** sie sagte noch nichts	*He frowned, but she still didn't say anything*

For ***aber*** with ***zwar*** in the preceding clause, see **17.6.1b**.

(b) *allein, doch* and *jedoch*

These are all alternatives to *aber* which are used mainly in formal written, especially literary registers.

(i) ***allein*** usually introduces a restriction which is unwelcome or unexpected:

Ich hatte gehofft, ihn nach der Sitzung zu sprechen, **allein** er war nicht zugegen	*I had hoped to speak to him after the meeting, but he wasn't present*

(ii) ***jedoch*** is rather more emphatic than ***doch***:

Der Lohn ist karg, **doch** man	*The wages are meagre, but one*

genießt die abendlichen Stunden	*enjoys the evening hours*
(*Jens*)	*In general he was not a good pupil,*
Im Allgemeinen war er kein guter Schüler, **jedoch** in Latein war er allen überlegen	*but he was better than any in Latin*

(c) *aber, doch* and *jedoch* are also used as modal particles or adverbs

For *aber*, see **9.1.1**, for *doch*, see **9.1.7**. They have much the same meaning when used like this as when they are used as conjunctions, but they form part of the clause rather than introduce it, and the word order is different. Compare these alternatives to the sentences in **(a)** and **(b)**:

Er runzelte die Stirn, sie **aber** sagte noch nichts

Er runzelte die Stirn, sie sagte **aber** noch nichts

Der Lohn ist karg, **doch** genießt man die abendlichen Stunden

Der Lohn ist karg, man genießt **doch** die abendlichen Stunden

…, in Latein **jedoch** war er allen überlegen

…, in Latein war er **jedoch** allen überlegen

Constructions like this highlight the contrast rather more than when these words are simply used as conjunctions. *aber* is often used like this if the verbs in the two clauses have the same subject, and the subject is then omitted in the second clause: *Er runzelte die Stirn, sagte aber noch nichts.*

(d) *sondern* 'but'

(i) ***sondern*** contradicts a preceding negative:

Er ist nicht reich, **sondern** arm	*He is not rich, but poor*
Das Wasser darf nicht mehr getrunken werden, **sondern** ist mindestens zehn Minuten lang abzukochen (*KlZ*)	*The water mustn't be drunk now but has to be boiled for at least ten minutes*

sondern is distinct from *aber*, which is only used after a negative if it doesn't contradict, i.e. if the linked elements are equally true:

Er ist nicht reich, **aber** ehrlich	*He is not rich, but (he is) honest*

(i.e. he is *both* 'not rich' *and* 'honest')

(ii) ***nicht nur*** … ***sondern auch*** corresponds to 'not only … but also':

Sie hatte zugegeben, daß sie den Lord in Würzburg **nicht nur** gesehen, s **ondern auch** gesprochen hatte (*Balden*)	*She had admitted that they hadn't only seen the lord in Würzburg, but also spoken to him*
Hierzu sind **nicht nur** Mitglieder, **sondern auch** Gäste eingeladen (*BrZ*)	Not just members are invited to this, but guests, too.
Nicht nur hat Helmut kräftig mitgeholfen, **sondern** Franziska hat **auch** ihren Teil dazu beigetragen	*It wasn't only Helmut who had helped immensely, but Franziska had done her bit too*

As the last example shows, initial *nicht nur* is followed immediately by the finite verb.

See **10.1.4** for the agreement of the finite verb if the subject consists of more than one noun or pronoun linked by *nicht nur … sondern auch.*

17.1.2 *denn, nämlich*

denn and ***nämlich*** mean 'because', but, like the rather old-fashioned English 'for', they are coordinating, not subordinating conjunctions,

and used in main clauses, with the verb in second position. Clauses with them give the reason for the event or action in the preceding clause, so they are never in first position in the sentence.

(a) *denn*

Wahrscheinlich hatte ich den Fremden angestarrt, **denn** er sah auf und lächelte (*R. Schoof*)	*I had probably been staring at the stranger because he looked up and smiled*
Wir wollten nicht länger draußen bleiben, denn es wurde langsam kalt	*We didn't want to stay outside any longer, as it was starting to get cold*

denn is perhaps becoming less common in spoken German, and *weil* is often heard in its place as a coordinating conjunction, followed by a main clause with the verb second. This is not regarded as acceptable in standard German, see **17.4.1**.

(b) *nämlich* is always placed within the clause, after the verb

Er konnte sie nicht verstehen, er war **nämlich** taub	*He couldn't understand her, as he was deaf*

17.1.3 *oder, beziehungsweise, entweder ... oder, weder ... noch*

These are **disjunctive** conjunctions, giving alternatives. See **10.1.4** for the agreement of the finite verb if the subject consists of two or more nouns or pronouns linked by them.

(a) *oder* is the most frequent equivalent for English 'or'

Ich weiß, was passiert, wenn eine Warmfront **oder** eine Kaltfront vorbeiziehen (*Grzimek*)	*I know what happens when a warm front or a cold front go past*
Morgen können wir zu Hause bleiben, **oder** wir können einen Spaziergang machen, wenn du willst	Tomorrow we can stay at home, or we can go for a walk if you want to
Wir können in Heidelberg **oder** in Mannheim umsteigen	We can change trains in Heidelberg or Mannheim
Sie wollten das Haus aus- **oder** umbauen	*They wanted to extend or alter the house*

oder can be ambiguous, like English 'or', since the alternatives linked by it can be **exclusive** (one or the other, but not both) or **inclusive** (i.e. 'and/or', as in the last example above). In order to confirm that exclusion is meant, *aber (auch)* can be added to *oder* (see **9.1.1b**), e.g.:

Wir können in Heidelberg, **oder aber (auch)** in Mannheim umsteigen

Alternatively, *beziehungsweise* or *entweder … oder* can be used to signal exclusion (see **(b)** and **(c)** below).

(b) *beziehungsweise* indicates mutually exclusive alternatives

In writing it is usually abbreviated to *bzw.*:

Sie haben lange in Deutschland gewohnt, **bzw**. sie haben dort oft Urlaub gemacht	*They lived a long time in Germany, or (else) they often took their holidays there*
Das Gerät kostet 300 Euro, **bzw**. 250 Euro mit Rabatt	*The appliance costs 300 euros, or 250 euros with the discount*

beziehungsweise was originally restricted to formal registers, but it is now commonly used in spoken German.

(c) *entweder … oder* 'either … or' signals mutually exclusive alternatives

Entweder er wird entlassen, **oder** er findet gar keine Stellung (*BILD*)	*He will either be dismissed or not find a job at all*

Less usually, *entweder* can be immediately followed by the verb, e.g. *Entweder wird er entlassen, oder …*

(d) *weder … noch* 'neither … nor'

Er liest **weder** Bücher **noch** Zeitungen	*He reads neither books nor newspapers*
Ich habe **weder** seinen Brief bekommen, **noch** habe ich sonst von ihm gehört	*Neither have I received his letter, nor have I heard from him in any other way*

A common alternative to *weder … noch* is to use ***und auch nicht/kein***. This is often felt to be less clumsy and more natural, especially in spoken German:

Er liest keine Bücher **und auch keine** Zeitungen

Ich habe seinen Brief nicht bekommen, **und** ich habe **auch nicht** sonst von ihm gehört

noch cannot be used on its own in the sense of 'nor' without a preceding *weder*. As an equivalent for English 'nor' without a preceding 'neither' (or 'or' preceded by a negative) German uses *und auch nicht/kein*:

Sie hat mir noch nicht geschrieben, **und** ich erwarte **auch nicht**, dass ich bald von ihr höre	*She hasn't written to me yet, nor do I expect to hear from her soon*
Ich höre die Nachrichten im Radio nicht **und** kaufe **auch keine**	*I don't listen to the news on the radio or buy newspapers*

Zeitungen

17.1.4 *und, sowie, sowohl … als*

(a) *und* is the common equivalent for English 'and'

Angela **und** Gudrun wollen auch kommen	*Angela and Gudrun want to come too*
Einer der Verdächtigten durchbrach eine Straßensperre **und** konnte erst nach einer Verfolgungsjagd gestoppt werden (*NZZ*)	*One of the suspects broke through a road block and could only be stopped after a chase*

(b) *sowie, sowohl … als* 'both … and', 'as well as'

These are frequent stylistic alternatives to *und*, especially in written German, although they are not unknown in speech. They emphasize the connection between the elements more than *und*, and they are often used with a following *auch*:

Dürrenmatt hat **sowohl** Dramen **als (auch)** Kriminalromane geschrieben	*Dürrenmatt wrote both plays and detective novels*

Less commonly, *wie* is used for *als* with *sowohl*.

sowie puts rather more stress on the second element than *sowohl … als*, e.g.:

Dürrenmatt hat Dramen **sowie (auch)** Kriminalromane geschrieben

Simple ***wie*** can also be used in the same contexts:

Das Haus wurde außen **wie** innen total renoviert

Dürrenmatt hat Dramen **wie (auch)** Kriminalromane geschrieben

See **12.1.4** for the agreement of the finite verb if the subject consists of more than one noun or pronoun linked by *sowohl … als* or *sowie*.

17.1.5 Less frequent coordinating conjunctions

(a) *bald … bald* 'one moment … the next', 'now … now'

This is mainly used in formal written registers. *bald* is followed immediately by the verb in both clauses:

Bald weinte das Kind, **bald** lachte es	*One moment the child was crying, the next it was laughing*

(b) *teils … teils* 'partly … partly'

Wir haben unseren Urlaub **teils** in Italien verbracht, **teils** in der Schweiz **teils** heiter, **teils** wolkig	*We spent our holiday partly in Italy, partly in Switzerland* *cloudy with sunny intervals*

When clauses are linked with *teils*, the verb follows immediately after *teils* in both clauses:

Teils war man sehr zuvorkommend, **teils** hat man mich völlig ignoriert	*Sometimes people were very helpful, at others I was completely ignored*

17.2 Noun clauses

Noun clauses have the same function in the sentence as nouns or noun phrases. They are most often found as complements of a verb, and for this reason they are also called COMPLEMENT CLAUSES.

They can be the subject (***Dass sie kommt***, *freut mich*), object (*Sie sah*, **wie er sich anstrengte**) or one of the other **complements** of a verb (see Table 16.1). If a noun clause is used as the **subject**, the verb has the third person singular endings, see **10.1.4a**.

Noun clauses in German can be introduced by ***dass***, ***ob***, ***wenn*** or the interrogative ***w*** **- words** (see **7.6**).

17.2.1 *dass* 'that'

(a) *dass* is the commonest conjunction used in noun clauses

It corresponds closely to English 'that', and is used to introduce all kinds of complement clauses:

• **subject**: **Dass sie morgen kommt**, erstaunt mich

• **accusative object**: Sie hat mir versichert, **dass alles in Ordnung sei**

• **genitive object**: Man klagt ihn an, **dass er das Geld gestohlen hat**

• **prepositional object**: Er hat darauf gewartet, **dass Peter ihn grüßte**

• **predicate complement**: Tatsache ist, **dass er gelogen hat**

Noun clauses with *dass* can also **depend on adjectives**, e.g. *Ich bin froh, dass du kommen konntest* or on **nouns related to verbs**, e.g. *Ihn quälte die Angst, dass etwas passieren könnte.*

(b) The omission of *dass*

The conjunction *dass* can be omitted in some contexts and some types of noun clause, and the dependent clause then has the order of a main clause, with the verb second. Compare the following alternatives:

Sie sagte, **dass** sie einen Brief **schreibe**

Sie sagte, sie **schreibe** einen Brief

However, it is far less frequent for German *dass* to be dropped than English *that*. It is possible to leave *dass* out:

(i) after verbs (and other expressions) of saying, when introducing indirect speech (see **14.4**):

Ich sagte, sie sei das einzige Mädchen, mit dem ich „diese Sache" tun wollte (*Böll*)	*I said she was the only girl I wanted to do "that" with*
Bei denen herrscht die Meinung vor, die Universitäten litten an der Überlast ungeeigneter Studenten (*Spiegel*)	*With these people the idea is dominant that universities are suffering from being overloaded with unsuitable students*

The alternative without *dass* is frequent in both spoken and written German, although *dass* is usually retained if the main verb is negative. Thus *Er sagte nicht, dass er sie nach Hause fahren werde* is more usual than *Er sagte nicht, er werde sie nach Hause fahren.*

(ii) after verbs (and other expressions) of perceiving, feeling, hoping, thinking and believing (in the widest sense). The omission of *dass* in these contexts is commoner in spoken than in written German.

Ich hatte gehofft, er würde es auf zehn Mark abrunden (*Böll*)	*I had hoped he would round it down to ten marks*
diejenigen, die jetzt noch glaubten, man könne in Europa so fortfahren	those who still believed even now that things could continue in

wie bisher (*Presse*)	Europe just as before
die Ahnung, sie könnte noch unterwegs sein	*the idea that she could still be on her way*

(c) Initial *dass*-clauses are more frequent in German than in English

Especially in written German, it is much more usual to find sentences which begin with a subject or object *dass* -clause than is the case in English, where we tend to provide a noun (especially 'the fact') for the 'that'-clause to link to. Compare:

Dass die Wahlergebnisse der DDR gefälscht waren, bestreitet auch Modrow nicht (*Spiegel*)	*The fact that the election results in the GDR were falsified is not disputed even by Modrow*
Dass er einmal nicht mehr wollen würde, wagte er nicht zu hoffen (*Walser*)	*The possibility that at some time he wouldn't want to any more, was something he didn't dare to hope*

(d) *dass* should not be followed immediately by another conjunction

Compare the following possibilities:

(i) Sie sagte, dass er, wenn er am Wochenende kommen sollte, bei ihrer Mutter übernachten könnte

(ii) Sie sagte, dass er bei ihrer Mutter übernachten könnte, wenn er am Wochenende kommen sollte

(iii) Sie sagte, dass, wenn er am Wochenende kommen sollte, er bei ihrer Mutter übernachten könnte

Ordering similar to (iii) is very frequent in English, with an adverbial clause following straight after 'that', e.g. 'She said that if he were to

come at the weekend he would be able to stay with her mother'.

However this ordering, although not unknown, is awkward in German, and it is considered preferable to insert at least the subject of the *dass*-clause, as in example (i), before starting a second clause, or to complete the *dass*- clause first, as in example (ii). English learners are strongly advised to avoid the construction exemplified in (iii).

(e) *dass*-clauses can be used in isolation

(i) in commands or wishes (often with an 'ethic' dative, see **2.5.2d**):

Dass du (mir) rechtzeitig nach Haus kommst! — *Make sure you're not too late home!*

(ii) in exclamations:

Dass die es heute so eilig haben! — *They* **are** *in a hurry today!*

17.2.2 Other conjunctions with noun clauses

(a) *ob* 'whether', 'if' typically indicates a question or a doubt

ob -clauses are all **indirect questions** and can have the following functions:

- **subject**: **Ob sie morgen kommt**, ist mir gleich
- **accusative object**: Sie vergaß, **ob sie eine Karte gekauft hatte**
- **prepositional object**: Ich erinnere mich nicht daran, **ob ich eine gekauft habe**
- **predicate complement**: Die Frage ist, **ob wir eine Tankstelle**

erreichen

ob -clauses are often used in isolation, especially in spoken German, to ask a question:

Ob es in Schwerin noch Glocken gibt? (*Surminski*)	*Are there still bells in Schwerin?*

They are also used to pick up or repeat a question, or to express a general query or supposition:

Ja, **ob** das wirklich stimmt?	*I wonder whether that's really right*

(b) *wenn* 'when', 'if'

Noun clauses introduced by *wenn* can function as:

• **subject**: Mir ist es recht, **wenn sie heute nicht kommt**

• **accusative object**: Sie mag es nicht, **wenn ich sie bei der Arbeit störe**

The verb in noun clauses introduced by *wenn* can be in the *Konjunktiv II* form if an unreal condition is involved, see **14.3.1**, e.g. *Mir* **wäre** *es recht, wenn sie heute nicht käme*. Noun clauses with *wenn* **always** have an anticipatory *es* in the main clause, see **17.2.3**.

(c) Interrogatives

All the ***w*- words** which can be used to ask questions (see **7.6**) can also be used as conjunctions to introduce noun clauses. Noun clauses with *w*- words are all indirect questions and can function as:

• **subject**: **Was sie dort macht**, ist mir gleich

• **accusative object**: Sie vergaß, **wie man es macht**

• **prepositional object**: Ich erinnere mich nicht daran, **wann ich es gehört habe**

• **predicate complement**: Die Frage ist, **wo sie es gekauft hat**

17.2.3 Correlates to complement clauses

In German, a noun clause is often **linked to a pronoun in the main clause which anticipates it**. Such pronouns are called **correlates**, and their form differs depending on the function of the clause.

(a) The pronoun *es* functions as a correlate to subject and object clauses

Dann fiel **es** mir auf, dass sie plötzlich fehlte	*Then I noticed that all at once she wasn't there*
Ich bedaure **es**, dass sie nicht kommen konnte	*I regret that she couldn't come*

More details on this 'correlating' *es* are given in **3.6.2**.

(b) The prepositional adverb as a correlate

The prepositional adverb, i.e. the form *da(r)* + preposition (see **3.5**), can act as a correlate in the main clause to noun clauses functioning as prepositional objects:

die Angst **davor**, dass er vielleicht nicht entkommen könnte	*the fear of perhaps not being able to escape*
Er verlässt sich **darauf**, dass wir rechtzeitig kommen	*He's relying on us arriving on time*

With many nouns, adjectives and verbs this use of the prepositional adverb is optional, see **6.4.1c** and **16.5.14**.

(c) *dessen*

The pronoun *dessen* can function as a correlate to noun clauses with the function of a genitive object. These constructions are infrequent in modern German, and largely restricted to formal registers. *dessen* is in all cases optional:

Ich bin mir (**dessen**) bewusst, dass ich ihn strafen sollte	*I am aware that I should punish him*

17.3 Conjunctions of time

The main conjunctions which introduce adverbial clauses of time in German are given in **Table 17.2**, together with an indication of the subsections where their use is explained.

Table 17.2 Conjunctions of time

als	*when*	**17.3.1**	**seit(dem)**	*since*	**17.3.5**
bevor	*before*	**17.3.2**	**sobald**	*as soon as*	**17.3.6**
bis	*until, till, by the time*	**17.3.2**	**solange**	*as long as*	**17.3.6**
da	*when*	**17.3.1**	**sooft**	*as often as, whenever*	**17.3.6**
ehe	*before*	**17.3.2**	**sowie**	*as soon as*	**17.3.6**
indem	*as*	**17.3.1**	**während**	*while, whilst*	**17.3.7**
indes, indessen	*while, whilst*	**17.3.7**	**wann, wenn**	*when(ever)*	**17.3.1**
kaum (dass)	*hardly, scarcely*	**17.3.3**	**wie**	*as*	**17.3.1**
nachdem	*after*	**17.3.4**	**wobei**	*when*	**17.3.8**

17.3.1 *als, da, indem, wann, wenn, wie*

All these conjunctions are the equivalent of English ‘when’ (or ‘as’) in various contexts.

(a) Clauses with *als* refer to a single event in the past

als corresponds to English ‘when’ or ‘as’:

Als ich in Passau ankam, habe ich sie auf dem Bahnsteig gesehen	*When I arrived in Passau, I saw her on the platform*
Als ich weiterging, wurde ich immer müder	As I went on, I grew more and more tired
Als die Frau später ihre Arbeitspapiere vorlegen musste, kam die Wahrheit an den Tag (*BILD*)	*When, later on, the woman had to show her work documents, the truth came to light*

A main clause following an *als* -clause is sometimes (optionally) introduced by a correlating *da*, e.g. *Als ich in Passau ankam*, **da** *habe ich sie auf dem Bahnsteig gesehen.*

(b) *da* is a literary (and rather old-fashioned) alternative to *als*

Die Sonne schien an einem wolkenlosen Himmel, **da** er seinen Heimatort verließ (*Dürrenmatt*)	*The sun was shining in a cloudless sky as/when he left his home village*

(c) *wie* can be used for 'when' with a verb in the present tense referring to a past action

i.e. with a 'historic' present (see **14.2.4**). *wie* is an alternative to *als* in such contexts:

Als/Wie ich das Fenster öffne, schlägt mir heftiger Lärm entgegen	*As/When I opened the window, I was confronted by an intense noise*

The use of *wie* in place of *als* with a past or perfect tense is common in colloquial spoken German, especially in the South, e.g. ***Wie*** *ich in Passau ankam/angekommen bin*, … This usage is occasionally found in writing, but it is not generally accepted as standard.

(d) *wann* is used in questions

wann is an interrogative adverb (= 'when?'), see **7.6**. As such, it is used to introduce questions in direct speech or in indirect speech (see **14.4.4**), e.g.:

Wann kommst du heute Abend nach Hause?	*When are you getting home tonight?*
Er hat mich gefragt, **wann** ich heute Abend nach Hause komme	*He asked me when I was getting home tonight*

(e) Clauses with *wenn* refer to the present, the future, or to repeated actions

Wir können rasten, **wenn** wir den Gipfel erreichen	*We can have a rest when we get to the top*
Ich bringe es, **wenn** ich morgen vorbeikomme	I'll bring it when I drop by tomorrow
Sie besucht uns immer, **wenn** sie nach Fulda kommt	*She always comes to see us when(ever) she's in Fulda*

A main clause following a *wenn* -clause can (optionally) be introduced by *dann*:

Wenn das Wasser ausgelaufen ist, (**dann**) schließt sich die Klappe automatisch	*When the water has run out, the valve shuts off automatically*

wenn often conveys the sense of English 'whenever', especially in the past, where *als* must be used if a single action is involved (see **(a)** above):

An den Bahnhöfen standen Grenzsoldaten und bewachten die	*Border guards stood on the stations and watched the tracks when(ever)*

Gleise, **wenn** die U-Bahn langsam mit geschlossenen Türen durchfuhr (*MM*)

an underground train went through slowly with its doors closed

wenn, not *als*, is used if there is a sense of a future-in-the-past:

Ich wollte zu Hause sein, **wenn** Karl ankam

I wanted to be at home when Karl arrived

wenn is also used in conditional clauses, i.e. = 'if' (see **14.4**). If there is a possibility of ambiguity, *immer wenn* can be used to emphasize that the sense is that of 'whenever'. Alternatively, *falls* can be used to make it clear that 'if' is meant (see **14.3.3d**).

(f) *indem* 'as' links simultaneous actions

Anna küsste ihre Mutter, **indem** sie die Palette und den nassen Pinsel in ihren Händen weit von ihr abhielt (*Th. Mann*)

Anna kissed her mother, holding the palette and the wet brush well away from her in her hands

This use of *indem*, where the *indem*- clause corresponds to an English 'ing' - phrase or a clause with 'while', is no longer frequent, even in literary registers. In modern German, *indem* is mainly used in the sense of English 'by' + '...ing', see **17.7c**. German equivalents of English phrases with an 'ing'-form are treated in **11.6**.

(g) Equivalents of English 'when' introducing relative clauses

e.g. *zu einer Zeit, wo* ... 'at a time **when** ...'. For these, see **5.4.6b**.

17.3.2 *bevor, ehe, bis*

For the occasional use of the subjunctive in clauses introduced by these conjunctions, see **14.5.4**.

(a) *bevor* and *ehe* 'before'

There is no real difference in meaning between *bevor* and *ehe. bevor* is far more frequent whilst *ehe* is typical of more formal registers, although it does occasionally occur in speech.

Der Kanzler muss das Volk befragen, **bevor** er einen Friedensvertrag unterzeichnet (*Presse*)	*The Chancellor has to ask the people before he signs/ before signing a Peace Treaty*
Es bestand, **ehe** die Erde geschieden war von den Himmeln (*Heym*)	*It existed before the earth was separated from the heavens*

bevor or *ehe* can be strengthened by *noch* to give the sense of '**even** before', e.g. ***Noch** bevor / ehe sie zurückkam* 'Even before she got back'.

(b) German equivalents for English 'not … before', 'not … until'

(i) The simplest equivalent is ***erst*** …, ***wenn* / *als***:

Ich will **erst** nach Hause gehen, **wenn** Mutter wieder da ist	*I don't want to go home before/until mother gets back*
Das Kind hörte **erst** zu weinen auf, **als** es vor Müdigkeit einschlief	*The child didn't stop crying until it was so tired that it fell asleep*

(ii) ***Nicht*** … ***bevor*** (or *ehe*) and ***nicht*** … ***bis*** are only used if the dependent clause implies a condition. An extra (redundant) *nicht* is often added:

Bevor er sich (nicht) entschuldigt	*She didn't want to leave the room*

hatte, wollte sie das Zimmer nicht verlassen	*before/until he had apologized*
Du darfst nicht gehen, **bis** du (nicht) deine Hausaufgaben fertig hast	*You can't go out until you've finished your homework*

If the subordinate clause precedes, then this second *nicht* is usually added, but the rule given by some authorities that *nicht* is only added then is not always followed in practice.

(c) *bis* has two main English equivalents

(i) 'until, till':

Ich warte hier, **bis** du zurückkommst	*I'll wait here till you get back*

(ii) 'by the time (when)':

Bis du zurückkommst, habe ich das Fenster repariert	*I'll have fixed the window by the time you get back*

17.3.3 *kaum (dass)*

The most usual German equivalent for English 'hardly/scarcely … when', 'no sooner … than' is to use two main clauses, the first introduced by ***kaum***, the second by ***so*** or ***da***:

Kaum hatten wir das Wirtshaus erreicht, **so/ da** begann es zu regnen	{	*We had hardly reached the inn when it began to rain* *No sooner had we reached the inn, than it began to rain*

Alternatively, a main clause introduced by ***kaum*** followed by a

subordinate clause with ***als*** can be used:

Kaum hatten wir das Wirtshaus erreicht, **als** es zu regnen begann

In formal written German, the phrasal conjunction ***kaum dass*** is sometimes used, although this now sounds rather old-fashioned:

Kaum dass wir das Wirtshaus erreicht hatten, begann es zu regnen

17.3.4 *nachdem*

Er wollte wissen, was mit Valette geschehen war, **nachdem** er sie das letzte Mal gesehen hatte (*Schneeweiß*)	*He wanted to know what had happened to Valette after he had seen her last*
Nachdem sie das Schiff verlassen hatten, suchte der junge Mann sofort nach einer Telefonzelle (*Balden*)	*After they had left the ship the young man immediately looked round for a telephone box*

nachdem is sometimes used in a causal sense, as an alternative to *da* (= 'as, since', see **17.4.1**):

Damit soll die Produktion von 30.000 Neuwagen eingespart werden, **nachdem** die Nachfrage in Europa äußerst schleppend läuft (*Presse*)	*With this the production of 30,000 new cars is to be stopped since demand in Europe is extremely sluggish*

This usage is typical of South Germany and Austria, even in written registers, but it is not considered standard elsewhere.

For *je nachdem* 'according as', see **17.7e**.

17.3.5 *seit, seitdem*

The shorter form *seit* was formerly restricted to colloquial registers, but it is now at least as frequent as *seitdem*, even in writing:

Seit(dem) er sein Haus verkauft hat, wohnt er in einem Hotel	*Since he sold his house, he's been living in a hotel*
Vertraut er ihr an, dass er unter Schreibstörungen leidet, **seit** er diesen Drehbuchauftrag bekommen hat? (*Schoof*)	*Will he confess to her that he has been suffering from writer's block since he got that commission for a screen-play?*

For the use of tenses in sentences with *seit* (*dem*), see **14.2.2** and **14.3.4a**.

17.3.6 *sobald, sowie, solange, sooft*

These conjunctions are always spelled as single words and are not normally followed by *als* or *wie*.

(a) *sobald* 'as soon as'

Sobald ich merkte, dass er gar nicht zuhörte, griff ich ihn am Ärmel (*Frisch*)	*As soon as I noticed he wasn't listening at all I grabbed him by the sleeve*

sowie is a frequent alternative to *sobald*, especially in less formal registers: ***Sowie*** *ich etwas weiß, rufe ich dich an.*

(b) *solange* 'as long as'

(i) *solange* can refer purely to time:

Wir haben gewartet, **solange** wir konnten	*We waited as long as we could*
Solange Leute da sind, werden wir Musik machen und ausschenken (*MM*)	*As long as there are people here we'll make music and pour drinks*

The sense of *solange* can approach that of *seit* (*dem*), as in the second example, and tense use is similar, see **12.1.2** and **12.2.4a**.

(ii) It may have a conditional sense (= 'provided that'), e.g.:

Solange er sein Bestes tut, bin ich zufrieden	*As long as he does his best, I shall be satisfied*

The conjunction *solange* is distinguished from the phrase *so lange* 'so long', which is written as two words:

Du hast uns **so lange** warten lassen, dass wir den Zug verpasst haben	*You kept us waiting so long that we missed the train*
So lange er auch wartete, es kam kein Zug mehr	*However long he waited, no more trains came*

(c) *sooft* corresponds to English 'as often as' or 'whenever'

Du kannst kommen, **sooft** du willst	*You can come as often as you want to*
Sooft er kam, brachte er uns immer Geschenke mit	*Whenever he came, he always brought us presents*

17.3.7 *während* and alternatives

(a) *während* is the usual equivalent of English 'while', 'whilst'

Like 'while', it can express time **or** a contrast (i.e. = 'whereas'):

Die Zollprobleme löste Boris, **während** wir in Urlaub waren (*Bednarz*)	*Boris solved the problems with the customs while we were on holiday*
Klaus Buch müsste auch sechsundvierzig sein, **während** der vor ihm Stehende doch eher sechsundzwanzig war (*Walser*)	*Klaus Buch ought to be forty-six as well, whereas the man standing in front of him was more like twenty-six*

(i) ***noch während*** is used for 'even as/whilst', e.g. ***Noch während*** *sie schlief* … 'Even as she slept …'

(ii) *während* is sometimes used with main clause word order (i.e. with the verb second) in colloquial speech. This usage is not accepted as standard.

(b) *indes* and *indessen*

These mean the same as *währen d.* They are used chiefly in formal, especially literary registers.

Seine Glieder zitterten, **indes** er diese grauenvolle Lust in sich erwürgte (*Süßkind*)	*His limbs were trembling as he throttled this terrible desire in himself*

(c) *wohingegen* signals a contrast

It is used mainly in formal registers as an alternative to *währen d.* It stresses the contrast more strongly and often corresponds to English 'whereas':

Auf fünf Stipendien hatten sich nur 18 Autoren beworben, **wohingegen** es im Vorjahr noch 40 Kandidaten gewesen waren (*MM*)	*Only 18 authors had applied for five grants, whereas the previous year there had been 40 candidates*

17.3.8 *wobei*

wobei introduces a clause with an action taking place at the same time as that of the main clause. It has no precise English equivalent, but a clause with *wobei* often corresponds to an English participial clause with an 'ing'-form (see **11.6.3b**), or a main clause joined with 'and':

Nach Angaben der Polizei schlug der Mann sie ins Gesicht, **wobei** er sie verletzte (*MM*)	*According to the police the man struck her in the face, injuring her*
Es kam zur Kollision mit dem Wagen einer 24-Jährigen, **wobei** sich beide Fahrzeuge überschlugen (*SGT*)	*A collision occurred with a car driven by a 24-year-old woman, and both vehicles overturned*

wobei is often used with a following main clause construction (i.e. with the verb in second position rather than at the end), especially when it is used in a meaning close to that of 'but' or 'although': e.g. *Sie ist immer sehr freundlich, wobei ich muss sagen, dass das nicht jedem gefällt.* This is a non-standard feature of colloquial speech.

17.4 Causal conjunctions

German conjunctions expressing a cause or a reason are given in **Table 17.3** with an indication of the sub-sections in which their use is explained.

Table 17.3 Causal conjunctions

da	*as, since*	**17.4.1**
nun (da/wo)	now that, seeing that	**17.4.2**
umso mehr, als	all the more because	**17.4.3**
weil	because	**17.4.1**
zumal	*especially as*	**17.4.3**

17.4.1 *da* and *weil*

The difference between *da* and *weil* is similar to that between English 'as' (or 'since') and 'because'. *da* -clauses, like those with 'as' or 'since', usually precede the main clause and typically indicate a reason which is already known.

Ich musste zu Fuß nach Hause gehen, **weil** ich die letzte Straßenbahn verpasst hatte	*I had to walk home because I had missed the last tram*
Weil dichter Nebel herrschte, konnten keine Maschinen landen	Because there was thick fog, no planes could land
Da er getrunken hatte, wollte er nicht fahren	*As he'd had something to drink, he didn't want to drive*

A *weil* -clause can be anticipated by *darum*, *deshalb* or *deswegen* in the preceding main clause, especially in spoken German. The effect is to give greater emphasis to the reason given in the *weil* -clause:

Er konnte **darum** / **deshalb** / **deswegen** nicht kommen, **weil** er plötzlich krank geworden war	*He wasn't able to come because he had suddenly got sick*

In everyday spoken German *weil* is frequently heard with main clause word order, i.e. with the finite verb second rather than at the end of the clause:

Du musst langsamer sprechen, **weil** der **versteht** nicht viel	*You'll have to speak more slowly because he doesn't understand a lot*

This usage has become very widespread in recent years, but it is generally considered non-standard and unacceptable in writing.

denn and ***nämlich*** are also used to indicate a cause or a reason (i.e. in the sense of English 'because'). They are, however, **coordinating** conjunctions, with main clause word order, see **17.1.2**.

17.4.2 *nun da*, etc.

Nun da wir alle wieder versammelt sind, können wir das Problem weiter besprechen	*Seeing/Now that we're all gathered together again, we can carry on talking about the problem*

There are several alternatives to *nun da*. Simple ***nun*** is occasionally found in formal written registers:

Nun alles geschehen ist, bleibt nur zu wünschen, dass … (*FAZ*)	*Now that everything has been done, one can only wish that …*

Other alternatives, i.e. *nun wo, wo … (doch), da … nun (mal)*, are typical of colloquial registers:

Nun wo du sowieso in die Stadt fährst, kannst du uns wohl mitnehmen, oder?	*Seeing as you're going into town anyway, you'll be able to take us with you, won't you?*
Ich muss es wohl tun, **wo** ich es dir (**doch**) versprochen habe	I'll have to do it, seeing that I promised you
Da er das **nun (mal)** schon weiß, (so) muss ich ihm wohl das Weitere erzählen	*Seeing that he already knows that, I'll have to tell him the rest*

17.4.3 Other causal conjunctions

(a) *zumal* is a stronger alternative to da

It corresponds to English 'especially as':

Sie wird uns sicher helfen, **zumal** sie dich so gern hat	*She's sure to help us, especially as she's so fond of you*
Mehr verriet sie nicht, **zumal** es Stiller gar nicht wunderte, warum sie dieses Bedürfnis hatte (*Frisch*)	*She didn't reveal any more, especially as Stiller was not at all surprised why she felt this need*

(b) *umso mehr ..., als/da/weil* correspond to 'all the more ... because'

Ich freute mich **umso mehr** über seinen Erfolg, **als/da/weil** er völlig unerwartet war	*I was all the more pleased about his success because it was totally unexpected*
Du musst früh ins Bett gehen, **umso mehr als** du morgen einen schweren Tag hast	*You've got to go to bed early, all the more because you've got a busy day tomorrow*

The construction with *umso ... , als* can be used with other comparatives:

Die Sache ist **umso** dringlicher, **als/da** die Iraner den Ölhahn zudrehen könnten	*The matter is all the more urgent because the Iranians might turn off the oil tap*

17.5 Conjunctions of purpose and result

German conjunctions indicating purpose or result (also called **final conjunctions** and **consecutive conjunctions** respectively) are given in **Table 17.4** with an indication of the sub-sections in which their use is explained.

Table 17.4 Conjunctions of purpose and result

als dass	*for … to*	**17.5.3**
auf dass	*so that* (purpose)	17.5.1
damit	*so that* (purpose)	17.5.1
derart dass	*so that* (consecutive)	17.5.2
so dass	*so that* (consecutive)	**17.5.2**

English learners need to note that 'so that' has two distinct senses, with different German equivalents:

• **Final** 'so that' expresses **purpose** and is an alternative to 'in order that'. The usual German equivalent is ***damit***, see **17.5.1**.

• **Consecutive** 'so that' expresses a **result** and has the sense of '(in) such (a way) that' and corresponds to German ***so dass***, see **17.5.2**.

17.5.1 Clauses of purpose

(a) *damit* is the most frequent conjunction in final clauses

Diese Tüte ist aus Papier, **damit** sie nicht aus Kunststoff ist	*This bag is made of paper so that it is not made of plastic*
König Ludwig ließ Wagner 40 000 Gulden auszahlen, **damit** sich der total verschuldete Meister bei seinen Gläubigern freikaufen konnte (*SZ*)	*King Ludwig had 40,000 guilders paid to Wagner so that the totally debt-ridden maestro could pay off his creditors*

The verb in *damit*- clauses is usually in the indicative in modern German. For the occasional use of the subjunctive, see **14.5.2a**.

Infinitive clauses with *um … zu* also have a final meaning (= 'in order to'), see **11.2.6a**.

(b) *auf dass* is an older alternative to *damit*

It is occasionally used nowadays for stylistic effect and has a very formal ring. It is always followed by a subjunctive, see **14.5.2b**:

die elektronischen Medien, die moderne Eltern glauben dulden zu müssen, **auf dass** ihr Kind nicht zum Außenseiter in der Peer-Group gerate (*FOCUS*)	*the electronic media which modern parents believe they have to tolerate so that their child does not become an outsider in its peer group*

(c) Simple *dass* is sometimes used for damit

This usage is most often found in colloquial speech, but it is not unknown in formal writing, where it is sometimes used with a subjunctive:

Ich mache dir noch ein paar Brote, **dass** du unterwegs auch was zu essen hast	*I'll make you a couple of sandwiches so that you've got something to eat on the journey*
Er entfernte sich leise, **dass** niemand ihn sehe, niemand ihn höre (*Süßkind*)	*He withdrew quietly, so that no-one should see him, no-one should hear him*

In colloquial German, *so dass* is sometimes used to introduce clauses of purpose. This usage is not considered standard.

17.5.2 Clauses of result

(a) *so dass* is the most frequent conjunction introducing clauses of result

so dass can alternatively be written as a single word (i.e. *sodass*), and

this is the usual form in Austria.

Sein Bein war steif, **so dass** er kaum gehen konnte	*His leg was stiff, so (that) he could hardly walk*
Das Wetter war schlecht, **so dass** wir wenig wandern konnten	The weather was bad, so (that) we couldn't do much hiking
Er schob den Ärmel zurück, **so dass** wir die Narbe sehen konnten	*He pushed his sleeve back, so (that) we were able to see the scar*

The difference between consecutive clauses and final clauses is clear if we replace *so dass* by *damit* in the last example. *Er schob die Ärmel zurück*, **damit** *wir die Narbe sehen konnten* implies that he did it with the express intention that we should see the scar. With *so dass*, the fact that we could see the scar is only the (possibly unintentional) result of his action.

(b) In clauses of result with adjectives or adverbs, the *so* can precede these

This is very similar to the corresponding constructions in English. Compare the examples below to the first two examples in **(a)** above:

Sein Bein war **so** steif, **dass** er kaum gehen konnte	*His leg was so stiff that he could hardly walk*
Das Wetter war **so** schlecht, **dass** wir wenig wandern konnten	*The weather was so bad that we weren't able to do much hiking*

derart and (in some contexts) *dermaßen* are more emphatic alternatives to *so* in such contexts:

Er fuhr **so/derart/dermaßen** langsam, **dass** Frieda uns leicht einholte	*He drove so slowly that Frieda caught us up easily*
Es hat **so/derart/dermaßen** geregnet, **dass** wir schon Montag	*It rained so much that we came home as early as Monday*

nach Hause gefahren sind

dermaßen is only possible if some idea of quantity is involved. Thus, only *derart* could replace *so* in: *Er hat den Ärmel* **so** / ***derart*** *zurückgeschoben, dass wir die Narbe sehen konnten.*

17.5.3 *als dass*

als dass is only used to introduce a clause after an adjective modified by ***zu***, ***nicht genug*** or ***nicht so***. The equivalent English sentences usually have an infinitive with 'for'. *Konjunktiv II*, particularly of a modal verb, is commonly used in these clauses, see **14.5.5a**.

Er ist **zu** vernünftig, **als dass** ich das von ihm erwartet hätte	*He's too sensible for me to have expected that of him*
Es ist noch **nicht so** kalt, **als dass** wir jetzt schon die Heizung einschalten müssten	It's not so cold for us to have to turn the heating on yet
Das Kind ist **nicht** alt **genug**, **als dass** wir es auf einer so langen Reise mitnehmen könnten	*The child is not old enough for us to be able to take it with us on such a long journey*

In everyday speech, simpler constructions are preferred to sentences with *als dass*, e.g. *Es ist noch nicht so kalt, also brauchen wir die Heizung noch nicht einschalten.*

If the subject of the two clauses is the same, an infinitive clause with ***um*** … ***zu*** is used rather than an *als dass*- clause (see **11.2.6a**).

17.6 Concessive conjunctions

Concessive conjunctions typically include the equivalents for English '(al)though' (see section **17.6.1**), and the forms which correspond to English 'however', 'where(so)ever', etc. (see section **17.6.2**). Conditional

concessive conjunctions (*selbst wenn*, *auch wenn*, *sogar wenn*, *wenn … auch* = English 'even if') are treated in **16.5.3d**.

17.6.1 German equivalents for English '(al)though'

(a) *obwohl* is the commonest concessive conjunction in current usage

Obwohl sie Schwierigkeiten mit dem Reißverschluss hatte, stand ich nicht auf, ihr zu helfen (*Böll*)	*Although she was having difficulties with her zip, I didn't stand up to help her*

If the *obwohl*- clause comes first, the contrast can be emphasized by using ***(so)*** … ***doch*** in the main clause:

Obwohl ich unterschrieben hatte, (**so**) blieb sie **doch** sehr skeptisch	*Although I had signed, she still remained very sceptical*

Less commonly, the contrast may be stressed by putting the verb second in the following main clause:

Obwohl er mein Cousin ist, ich **kann** nichts für ihn tun	*Although he is my cousin, I can't do anything for him*

obwohl is occasionally used with the word order of a main clause, i.e. with the verb second: *Sie kann ihn sehen*, **obwohl** *es* **ist** *sehr dunkel*. This usage is increasing, especially in spoken German, but it is not accepted as standard.

(b) Other concessive conjunctions

(i) ***obgleich*** is a frequent alternative to *obwohl*:

Ein Wunsch eint sie, **obgleich** sie alle wissen, dass kein Geld mehr da ist (*MM*)	*One wish unites them although they all know that there's no more money there*

(ii) ***obschon*** is quite common in Swiss usage:

Über ihre Zukunft machen sie sich wenig Sorgen, **obschon** sie sich der hohen Arbeitslosigkeit im Land bewusst sind (*NZZ*)	*They are not very worried about their future although they are aware of the high unemployment in the country*

(iii) ***trotzdem*** is sometimes used as a conjunction to mean 'although':

Ich hab die jungen Herrschaften auch gleich erkannt, **trotzdem** es ein bisschen dunkel ist (*Th. Mann*)	*I recognized the young master and mistress immediately although it is a little dark*

The use of *trotzdem* as a conjunction is widely considered a non-standard colloquialism, and many Germans think it should be avoided in writing.

(iv) A common alternative way to express concession is a construction with ***zwar*** … ***aber***, i.e. with two main clauses. The first one contains the particle *zwar* (see **9.1.35a**), and the second is introduced by *aber*:

Bei den Hotlines gab es **zwar** laufend Anrufe, **aber** keine größeren Störfälle (*Presse*)	*Although there was a stream of calls to the hotlines, there weren't any major breakdowns*

(v) Other alternatives to *obwohl* are used occasionally in written German, roughly in the following descending order of frequency: *wenngleich, wiewohl, obzwar.*

17.6.2 Clauses of the type 'however', 'whoever', 'whenever', etc.

(a) The usual German equivalent for these is *wie … auch, wer … auch*, etc.

i.e. the clause is introduced by one of the interrogative pronouns (see **5.3**) or the interrogative adverbs (see **7.6**), and the particle *auch* is placed later in the clause:

Wer er **auch** ist, ich kann nichts für ihn tun	*Whoever he is, I can't do anything for him*
Wann sie **auch** ankommt, ich will sie sofort sprechen	Whenever she arrives, I want to speak to her immediately
Wohin sie **auch** hingeht, ich werde ihr folgen	Wherever she may go, I shall follow her
Wo er sich **auch** zeigte, er wurde mit Beifall begrüßt	*Wherever he showed himself, he was greeted with applause*

As the examples show, a main clause following these concessive clauses usually has normal word order, with the verb second, see **19.2.1c**. Other features of this type of concessive clause:

(i) The modal verb *mögen* often occurs in these clauses, especially in more formal registers, e.g. *Wer er auch sein* **mag**, …; *Wann sie auch ankommen* **mag**, … etc. (see **15.4.3**).

(ii) In modern German, the indicative mood is used in clauses of this type. The subjunctive still occurs occasionally, but it can sound affected, except in the set phrase *Wie dem auch sei* 'However that may be'.

(iii) *auch* can be strengthened by adding *immer*, e.g. *Wo er sich* **auch immer** *zeigte*, … Alternatively, *immer* can be used on its own. It always follows the interrogative, e.g. *Wo* **immer** *er sich zeigte …*

(b) *so/wie … auch* corresponds to English 'however' followed by an adjective or an adverb

So/Wie gescheit er **auch** sein mag,	*However clever he may be, he's not*

für diese Stelle passt er nicht	*right for this job*
So/Wie teuer das Bild **auch** ist/sein mag, ich will es doch kaufen	However dear the picture is, I'm still going to buy it
So höhnisch die Antwort Vittlars **auch** sein mochte, gab sie mir dennoch mehr Gewissheit (*Grass*)	*However scornful Vittlar's answer may have been, it still gave me more certainty*

Similarly *sosehr … auch* is usual for 'however much':

Sosehr das Publikum die feurigen Latinorhythmen **auch** beklatschte, getanzt wurde nicht (*MM*)	*However much the public clapped in time to the fiery Latin rhythms, nobody danced*

noch so can be used in a concessive sense with a following adjective. Compare the following alternative for the first example above: *Er mag* **noch so** *gescheit sein, für diese Stelle passt er nicht.*

(c) *was für (ein) or welcher … auch* corresponds to 'whatever' with a noun

Was für Schwierigkeiten du **auch** hast, es ist der Mühe wert	*Whatever difficulties you may have, it's worth the trouble*
diese Vorgänge, von **welcher** Seite man sie **auch** betrachtet (*SZ*)	these events, from whatever side one considers them
aus **welchem** Land **auch immer**	from whatever country
aus **welchem** Grund **auch immer**	*for whatever reason*

17.7 Conjunctions of manner and degree

(a) *als* and *wie* introduce comparative clauses

For the use of *als* and *wie* generally in comparatives, see **6.5.2**:

Wir fahren schneller, **als** du denkst	*We're travelling faster than you think*
Der Vortrag war nicht so interessant, **wie** ich erwartet hatte	*The lecture was not as interesting as I had expected*

Clauses expressing unreal comparisons with ***als ob/wenn*** (= 'as if') are explained in **14.5.1**. For *je … umso/desto* 'the more … the more', see **6.5.2g**.

(b) *außer dass* and *außer wenn*

(i) ***außer dass*** corresponds to English 'except that'

Ich habe nichts herausfinden können, **außer dass** er erst im April zurückkommt	*I couldn't find anything out, except that he's not coming back till April*

An infinitive clause with ***außer … zu*** can be used if the subjects of the two clauses are the same, see **11.2.6d**.

(ii) ***außer wenn*** corresponds to English 'except when' or 'unless'

Wir gingen oft im Gebirge wandern, **außer wenn** es regnete	*We often used to go hiking in the mountains, except when/unless it was raining*
Du brauchst die Suppe nicht zu essen, **außer wenn** du sie wirklich magst	*You don't need to eat the soup, unless you really like it*

Simple ***außer*** is often used for *außer wenn*, especially in colloquial speech. It is followed by the word order of a main clause, with the verb second, e.g. *Wir gehen morgen im Gebirge wandern*, **außer** *es regnet.*

For other equivalents for English 'unless', see **14.3.3d**.

For ***anstatt dass*** 'instead of', see **11.2.6c**.

(c) *dadurch dass* and *indem* have instrumental meaning

Their usual English equivalent is 'by' followed by the 'ing'-form of the verb, see also **11.6.2a**:

Er hat sich **dadurch** gerettet, **dass** er aus dem Fenster sprang Er hat sich gerettet, **indem** er aus dem Fenster sprang	}	*He saved himself by jumping out of the window*
Man kann **dadurch** Unfälle vermeiden helfen, **dass** man die Verkehrsvorschriften beachtet Man kann Unfälle vermeiden helfen, **indem** man die Verkehrsvorschriften beachtet	}	*One can help to avoid accidents by observing the highway code*

This is the only current use of *indem* in modern German. Its use in time clauses, see **17.3.1f**, is now obsolete.

(d) *insofern (als), insoweit (als), sofern, soviel, soweit*

These are all very close in meaning.

(i) ***insofern (als)*** and ***insoweit (als)*** correspond to English '(in) so/as far as' or 'inasmuch as'

Ich werde dir helfen, **insofern (als)** ich kann/ **insoweit (als)** ich kann	*I'll help you in so far as I'm able to*

insofern and *insoweit* can be placed within a preceding main clause, especially qualifying an adjective or adverb. In this case they **must** be used with a following *als*:

Diese Verhandlungen werden **insofern/ insoweit** schwierig sein, **als** es sich um ein ausgesprochen heikles Problem handelt	*These negotiations will be difficult, inasmuch as we're dealing with an extremely delicate problem*

The use of *insofern* with a following *weil* or *dass* rather than *als* is frequent in colloquial registers, but not accepted as standard.

(ii) ***soweit*** usually has the sense of '(in) so/as far as'/'as much as'. In this sense *soweit* is an alternative to *insofern/insoweit (als)*:

Ich werde dir helfen, **soweit** ich kann **Soweit** ich die Lage beurteilen kann, muss ich ihm Recht geben	*I'll help you as much as I can* *In so far as I can judge the situation, I've got to admit he's right*

soweit can sometimes be used in a conditional sense. In such contexts it is an alternative to *sofern*, see below and **14.3.3d**:

Soweit/Sofern noch Interesse besteht, wollen wir schon morgen damit anfangen	*Provided there's still interest, we're going to make a start tomorrow*

Note that 'as far as I know' is: ***soviel*** *ich weiß.*

(iii) ***sofern*** usually has a conditional sense, corresponding to English 'provided that' or 'if'. See also **14.3.3d**.

Sofern wir es im Stadtrat durchsetzen können, wird die neue Straße bald gebaut	*Provided (that)/If we can get it through the town council, the new road will soon be built*

(e) *je nachdem* 'according to', 'depending on'

je nachdem is normally used with a following *ob* or an interrogative:

Je nachdem, ob es ihm besser geht oder nicht, wird er morgen verreisen	*Depending on whether he's better or not, he'll leave tomorrow*
Je nachdem, wann wir fertig sind, werden wir hier oder in der Stadt essen	Depending on when we get finished, we'll eat here or in town
Je nachdem, wie das Wetter wird, werden wir am Montag oder am Dienstag segeln gehen	*According to what the weather is like, we'll go sailing on Monday or Tuesday*

je nachdem often occurs in isolation, e.g.:

Kommst du morgen mit? Na, **je nachdem**	*Are you coming tomorrow? Well, it depends*

(f) *nur* dass 'only (that)'

In der neuen Schule hat er sich gut eingelebt, **nur dass** seine Noten etwas besser sein könnten	*He's settled down well at his new school, only his marks could be a bit better*

A main clause introduced by *nur* is often preferred to *nur dass* in spoken German, e.g. *In der neuen Schule hat er sich gut eingelebt,* **nur** *könnten seine Noten etwas besser sein.*

(g) *ohne dass* 'without'

ohne dass must be used for English 'without' followed by an 'ing' - form if the subordinate clause has a different subject from the main clause. The subjunctive is often used in these clauses, see **14.5.5a**:

Er verließ das Zimmer, **ohne dass** wir es merkten	*He left the room without our/us noticing*
Sie haben mir sofort geholfen, **ohne dass** ich sie darum bitten musste/müsste	*They helped me immediately without my having to ask them*

If the subjects of the two clauses are the same, an infinitive clause with ***ohne*** … ***zu*** can be used for English 'without' + '…ing', see **11.6.2f**.

Prepositions

PREPOSITIONS are a small class of words which combine with a following **noun phrase** to form a PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE. Prepositional phrases often express notions of time, place and direction and are typically (but not only) used as ADVERBIALS.

In German, the **noun phrase following each preposition is in a particular** CASE – we say that the preposition 'governs' a particular case. Most German prepositions govern the dative or the accusative case. Prepositions governing the genitive are mainly restricted to formal registers. One important group of common prepositions is followed by the accusative **or** the dative case, with a difference in meaning. **Table 18.1** gives the most important German prepositions, with the case they govern.

Table 18.1 The main German prepositions and their cases

accusative	**bis durch für gegen ohne um**
dative	**aus außer bei gegenüber mit nach seit von zu**
accusative or dative	**an auf hinter in neben über unter vor zwischen**
genitive	**(an)statt entlang trotz während wegen**

This chapter explains the use of all the prepositions of German, ordered according to the case they govern:

• prepositions governing the **accusative** (section **18.1**)

• prepositions governing the **dative** (section **18.2**)

• prepositions governing the **dative** or the **accusative** (section **18.3**)

• prepositions governing the **genitive** (section **18.4**)

• German equivalents for **English 'to'** (section **18.5**)

The most important literal and figurative senses of each preposition are treated together.

Some uses of prepositions are dealt with in detail elsewhere in the book, as indicated below:

• the use of prepositions after **adjectives** (section **6.3.2**)

• prepositions with verbs – **prepositional objects** (section **16.5**)

• the **contraction** of some prepositions with the definite article, e.g. *am*, *ins* (section **4.1.1c**)

• the **prepositional adverb**, e.g. *darauf*, *damit* (section **3.5**)

18.1 Prepositions governing the accusative case

Six common prepositions are used with the accusative:

bis **durch** **für** **gegen** **ohne** **um**

The following are less frequent and are treated together in **18.1.7**:

à **betreffend** **eingerechnet** **pro** **wider**

The preposition ***entlang*** is also often used with the accusative, but case usage with it is very variable and appears to be changing rapidly. Modern usage is outlined in section **18.4.2**.

18.1.1 *bis*

In practice, ***bis* is rarely used as a preposition in its own right**. It is **never** followed by an article (or any determiner), and it is used on its own only with names, adverbs and some time phrases. Otherwise it is followed by another preposition which determines the case of the following noun.

(a) Referring to place, *bis* means 'as far as', '(up) to'

(i) Followed by names of places and adverbs ***bis*** is used **without an article**. In practice the case of the following noun is never obvious:

Ich fahre nur **bis** Frankfurt *I'm only going as far as Frankfurt*

Bis dahin gehe ich mit *I'll go that far with you*

bis hierher und nicht weiter *so far and no further*

With names of towns, cities and countries, ***bis*** or ***bis nach*** can be used. The latter is more emphatic: *Wir fahren* **bis (nach)** *Freiburg, von Köln* **bis (nach)** *Aachen.*

(ii) If the following noun has an article, **an appropriate preposition must follow** (usually the appropriate equivalent of English 'to', see **18.5**):

Wir gingen **bis zum** Waldrand	*We went as far as the edge of the forest*
Sie ging **bis zur** Tür	She went up to the door
Sie ging **bis an** die Tür	She went right up to the door
Sie standen im Wasser **bis an** die Knie	They were standing in water up to

Sie standen im Wasser **bis über** die Knie	their knees They were standing in water
bis hin zu den Wanzen im Gesicht (*Borst*)	coming up over their knees right down to the warts on his face
Er stieg **bis aufs** Dach	He climbed right onto the roof
bis über die Ohren verschuldet	*up to one's ears in debt*

bis zu can be used in the sense of 'up to' with quantities, e.g. *Bis zu dreißig Kinder nahmen an dem Ausflug teil.* See **8.1.6** for further details of this usage and the distinction between the adverbial and prepositional usage of *bis zu* with quantities.

(b) Referring to time, *bis* means 'until' or 'by'

(i) *bis* indicates an **end-point in time** and can correspond to English 'until' or 'by':

Bis 2010 hat er in Wien gelebt	*Until 2010 he lived in Vienna*
Das Geschäft ist von 9 Uhr **bis** 18.30 Uhr durchgehend geöffnet	The shop is open continuously from 9 a.m. until 6.30 p.m.
Ich werde es **bis** heute Abend/ **bis** Montag fertig haben	*I'll have it finished by tonight / by Monday*
bis nächste Woche, nächstes Jahr	until next week, next year
bis dahin/ **bis** dann	by then, until then
bis jetzt, **bis** anhin (Sw.)	up to now
Bis dahin bin ich längst zurück	*I'll be back long before then*

(ii) With **days of the week**, **months** and **dates**, *bis* can be used with or without a following *zu* (and the definite article):

bis (zum) Freitag	*by/until Friday*
bis (zum) 11. Juni	by/until the 11th of June
Bis (zum) kommenden Montag kannst du mich hier erreichen	*You can reach me here till next Monday*

(iii) In other contexts ***bis*** **must be followed by** ***zu*** (or another appropriate preposition) with the definite article:

bis zum 18. Jahrhundert	*until/by the 18th century*
bis zu seinem Tode	until his death
bis vor kurzem	until recently
Bis vor zwei Wochen war er hier	He was here until two weeks ago
Ich arbeite **bis gegen** Mittag im Büro	I'm working at the office until about noon
Wir wollen es **bis auf** weiteres verschieben	We'll postpone it for the present
bis tief/spät **in** die Nacht hinein	*till late at night*

A date following a phrase with *bis* and a weekday is in the accusative, e.g. *bis Montag*, **den** *5. September*. In other contexts, the date is in the dative, e.g. *bis morgen*, **dem** *11. November*.

erst is used for 'not until', e.g. *Er kommt erst am Montag*, see **9.1.12**.

bis is used in leave-taking phrases: *Bis gleich! Bis bald! Bis morgen! Bis nächste Woche!*

(c) *bis auf* (+ acc.) means 'down to (and including)' or 'all but', 'except'

Die Kabinen waren mit 447 Passagieren **bis auf** das letzte Klappbett belegt (*Zeit*)	*With 447 passengers, the cabins were full down to the last camp bed*
Bis auf drei kamen alle Insassen ums Leben	*All but three of the passengers were killed*

bis auf can be ambiguous: *Der Bus war* **bis auf** *den letzten Platz besetzt* can mean 'The bus was full down to the last seat' or 'The bus was full except for the last seat'.

18.1.2 *durch*

(a) *durch* means 'through', referring to place

Sie ging **durch** die Stadt	*She went through the city*
Er atmete **durch** den Mund	*He was breathing through his mouth*
mitten **durch** den Park (see **7.1.3**)	*through the middle of the park*

durch is often strengthened by adding *hindurch*, see **7.2.4**, e.g. *Wir gingen* **durch** *den Wald* **hindurch** 'We went (right) through the forest'.

It can also be used for English 'across', especially with a preceding *quer*. This can give the sense of 'crosswise', 'diagonally', but it is often used simply to strengthen *durch* (i.e. = 'right through'):

Wir wateten (**quer**) **durch** den Fluss im Rahmen ihrer Frühlingstournee **quer durch** Deutschland (*MM*)	*We waded across the river* *in the course of their spring tour* *right across Germany*

(b) *durch* can be used in the sense of English 'throughout'

(i) This is its usual sense when it refers to time, in which case it can be strengthened by adding *hindurch*, e.g. ***durch*** *viele Generationen* **(hindurch)** 'throughout many generations'.

(ii) *hindurch* can be used without a preceding *durch* for 'throughout' after an accusative phrase of time with *ganz*, see **2.2.2a**:

den ganzen Winter **hindurch**	*throughout the winter*
die ganze Nacht **hindurch**	*throughout the night*

durch can also be used on its own after the noun in this meaning: *die ganze Nacht* **durch**.

(iii) A phrase with *ganz* and an appropriate preposition is needed to give the sense of English 'throughout' referring to place, e.g.:

im **ganzen** Land *throughout the country*

durch die **ganze** Stadt *throughout the town*

(c) *durch* is used to express means

This use of *durch* is related to its use for 'by' in passive sentences, see **13.3**.

(i) *durch* indicates the means through whom or which an action is carried out:

Durch harte Arbeit hat er sein Ziel erreicht	*He attained his aim by (means of) hard work*
Er ist **durch** einen Unfall ums Leben gekommen	He was killed in an accident through his own fault
durch seine eigene Schuld Ich habe es **durch** Zufall erfahren	*I learnt of it by chance*

(ii) *durch* in this sense corresponds to **'by' with a verbal noun**:

die Annahme des Kaisertitels **durch** den König	*the assumption of the title of emperor by the king*
die Erfindung des Verbrennungsmotors **durch** Benz und Daimler	*the invention of the internal combustion engine by Benz and Daimler*

durch with a verbal noun often corresponds to English 'by' with an 'ing'-form, see **11.6.2a**, e.g. *durch Betätigung des Mechanismus* 'by activating the mechanism'.

(iii) The prepositional adverb ***dadurch*** often has the sense of 'thereby':

Was willst du **dadurch** erreichen?	*What do you hope to gain by that?*
Meinst du, **dadurch** wird alles wieder gut?	*Do you think that will make everything all right again?*

For the compound conjunction ***dadurch, dass*** 'by …ing' see **17.7c**.

18.1.3 *für*

(a) *für* corresponds to English 'for' in a wide range of senses

i.e. where 'for' has the meaning of 'on behalf of' and the like, e.g.:

Er hat viel **für** mich getan *He's done a lot for me*

Das wäre genug **für** heute *That'll be enough for today*

Das war sehr unangenehm **für** mich *That was very unpleasant for me*

Für einen Ausländer spricht er recht gut Deutsch *He speaks pretty good German for a foreigner*

Das ist kein Buch **für** Kinder *That's not a book for children*

Ich habe es **für** zehn Euro gekriegt *I got it for ten euros*

für is used idiomatically in *ein Sinn, ein Beispiel* **für** *etwas* 'a sense, an example **of** sth.'

Where English 'for' expresses **purpose**, its usual German equivalent is *zu*, see **18.2.9d**.

(b) *für* indicates a period of time extending from 'now'

In this sense, it corresponds to English 'for':

Ich habe das Haus **für** sechs Monate gemietet	*I've rented the house for six months*
Am nächsten Tag fuhren wir **für** einen Monat in den Schwarzwald	*The next day we went to the Black Forest for a month*

auf (+ accusative) is a less common alternative in this meaning, used chiefly in formal registers and set expressions, see **18.3.5c**.

Less frequently, a phrase with *für* is used to refer to a period of time lying entirely in the past or future, e.g. *Nur während der Wintermonate blieb er für längere Zeit an einem Ort* (*Bumke*). An accusative phrase is more usual in this meaning, see **(c)** below.

The use of *für* is idiomatic in ***Tag für Tag*** 'day by day'.

(c) German equivalents of English 'for' referring to time

(i) a phrase in the accusative case (see **2.2.2a**) used to denote a period of time lying entirely in the past or future, e.g. *Er blieb* **einen Monat (lang)** *in Berlin* 'He remained in Berlin for a month'. The phrase is often followed by *lang*.

In spoken registers an accusative phrase is often used rather than *für* to refer to a period of time extending from the present, e.g. *Ich gehe* **eine halbe Stunde (lang)** *ins Cafe*.

(ii) ***seit*** refers to a period of time which began in the past and extends up to the present, e.g. *Ich warte* **seit einer Stunde** *auf dich* 'I've been waiting for you for an hour'. See **18.2.7** for further details.

(iii) ***für*** (or more formal *auf*) to refer to a period of time, as illustrated in **(b)** above.

18.1.4 *gegen*

(a) Referring to place or opposition, *gegen* means 'against'

Er warf den Ball **gegen** die Mauer	*He threw the ball against the wall*
gegen den Strom schwimmen	swim against the current
Sie verteidigte sich **gegen** diese Leute	*She defended herself against those people*

The prepositional adverb *dagegen* indicates opposition, e.g.:

Hast du was **dagegen**, wenn wir früher anfangen?	*Do you have any objection to our starting earlier?*

Note the different idiomatic usage: *Ich brauche Tabletten* **gegen** *Kopfschmerzen*, but: 'I need tablets **for** a headache'.

(b) *gegen* can indicate direction

(i) *gegen* often corresponds to 'into':

Er fuhr **gegen** einen Baum	*He drove into a tree*
Wir müssen aufpassen, dass wir nicht **gegen** die Kraterwände fliegen (*Grzimek*)	*We've got to watch out that we don't fly into the sides of the crater*

(ii) In some contexts *gegen* has the sense of 'towards':

Michael will die Maschine mit dem Propeller **gegen** die flache Böschung am Seeufer drehen (*Grzimek*)	*Michael intends to turn the aeroplane with the propellor towards the slight incline on the lake shore*

The use of *gegen* in the sense of 'towards' with the points of the compass is obsolete. For older *gegen Norden fahren* one now finds ***nach*** *Norden fahren*, see **18.2.6**. The form *gen* (e.g. *gen Norden fahren*) is

restricted to elevated literary registers and sounds archaic.

Note the difference from English usage in *etwas* **gegen** *das Licht halten* 'hold sth. **up to** the light'.

(c) *gegen* can express a contrast (= 'contrary to', 'compared with')

Ich handelte **gegen** seinen Befehl	*I acted against/contrary to his orders*
gegen alle Erwartungen	against/contrary to all expectations
Gegen meine Schwester bin ich groß	I'm tall compared to my sister
gegen früher	*compared to formerly*

(d) *gegen* can have the sense of '(in exchange/return) for'

Er gab mir das Geld **gegen** eine Quittung	*He gave me the money in exchange for a receipt*
Ich will meine Digitalkamera **gegen** einen HD-Camcorder eintauschen	*I want to exchange my digital camera for an HD camcorder*

(e) *gegen* can express approximation (= 'about')

Es waren **gegen** (*or* etwa, *or* an die) 500 Zuschauer im Saal	*There were about 500 spectators in the hall*

(f) *gegen* is used after a number of nouns and adjectives

See also **6.4.1**. These nouns or adjectives mostly involve a mental attitude 'towards' something or someone, e.g.:

die Abneigung gegen	*aversion towards*	die Grausamkeit gegen	*cruelty towards*
der Hass gegen	hatred of	das Misstrauen gegen	distrust of
argwöhnisch gegen	suspicious of	gleichgültig gegen	*indifferent to*
gesichert gegen	*secure against*		

seine Pflicht gegen seine Eltern	*his duty towards his parents*
sein Verhalten gegen seinen Chef	his attitude to(wards) his boss
rücksichtslos/rücksichtsvoll gegen	*(in)considerate towards*

With some of these nouns and adjectives *gegenüber* or *zu* may be a possible alternative to *gegen*, see **18.2.4d** and **18.2.9g**.

(g) Referring to time, *gegen* means 'about' or 'towards'

It can be ambiguous, especially with clock times (see **8.5.1**), as some Germans understand *gegen zwei Uhr* to mean 'at about two o'clock', while others interpret it as 'just before two o'clock'. In other phrases it usually has the meaning 'towards'. It is normally used without an article in time expressions:

gegen Mittag, **gegen** Abend *towards noon, towards evening*

gegen Monatsende *towards the end of the month*

gegen Ende des Jahrhunderts *towards the end of the century*

18.1.5 *ohne*

In most contexts *ohne* corresponds to English '**without**':

Das tat er **ohne** mein Wissen	*He did it without my knowledge*
Er geht selten **ohne** Schirm	He rarely goes walking without an
Das haben wir **ohne** große	umbrella

Schwierigkeiten erledigt	*We managed it without too much difficulty*

ohne can be used idiomatically on its own in colloquial speech:

Der Wein ist nicht **ohne**	*The wine's got quite a kick*
Er ist gar nicht so **ohne**	*He's got what it takes*

After the combination *mit oder ohne* it is nowadays acceptable to ignore the usual rule that the noun phrase must be repeated after prepositions which govern different cases. It is thus not necessary to say or write *mit Kindern oder ohne Kinder* or *mit ihm oder ohne ihn* because *mit oder ohne Kinder* or *mit oder ohne ihn* is acceptable.

ohne is used with **no determiner** in many contexts where English has an indefinite article or a possessive, see **4.10**.

For the use of *ohne* in **infinitive clauses** (i.e. ***ohne … zu***), see **11.2.6b**; for the conjunction ***ohne dass***, see **17.7g**.

18.1.6 *um*

(a) Referring to place, *um* means '(a)round', 'about'

Wir standen **um** den Teich	*We were standing (a)round the pond*
Er kam **um** die Ecke	*He came (a)round the corner*
Sie sah **um** sich	*She looked round (in all directions)*

um can be strengthened by adding *rund*, *rings* or *herum* (see **7.2.4b**):

Wir standen **rings/rund um** den Tisch *or* **um** den Tisch **herum**	
Er kam **um** die Ecke **herum**	
Sie sah **um** sich **herum**	

(b) *um* referring to time

(i) ***um*** corresponds to English **'at' with clock times**, e.g. *um vier Uhr* 'at four o'clock', etc. (see **8.5.1**).

(ii) With other time words ***um*** **expresses approximation**. It corresponds to English 'around' or 'about' and is often used with *herum* following the noun:

um Mitternacht (herum)	*around midnight*
um Ostern (herum)	round about Easter time
um 1890 (herum)	around 1890
die Tage **um** die Sommersonnenwende (herum)	*the days either side of the summer solstice*

um diese Zeit is ambiguous. It can mean 'at this time' or 'around this time'. Adding *herum*, i.e. *um diese Zeit herum*, makes it clear that the second meaning is intended.

(iii) Idiomatic time phrases with *um*:

Stunde **um** Stunde	*hour after hour*
einen Tag **um** den anderen	*one day after the other*

(c) *um* can be used adverbially with numerals in the sense of 'about', 'approximately'

(see **8.1.6**). It is then often followed by a definite article, but a following adjective has **strong** endings, e.g. ***um die*** *vierzig ausländische Gäste.*

(d) *um* is used to denote the degree of difference

This usually corresponds to English 'by':

Ich werde meinen Aufenthalt **um** zwei Tage verlängern	*I shall extend my stay by two days*
Sie hat sich **um** 18 Euro verrechnet	She was 18 euros out in her calculations
um die Hälfte mehr	half as much again
eine Erweiterung der EU **um** Rumänien	*an expansion of the EU by the inclusion of Romania*

When *um* is used in this sense with a comparative adjective and a measurement phrase (see **6.5.2b**), an alternative to *um* is simply to put the measurement phrase in the **accusative** case, e.g. *Sie ist (um)* **einen Kopf** *größer als ich.*

(e) *um* can convey the idea of 'in respect of', 'concerning'

This sense is common when *um* is used in a prepositional object, see **16.5.10**, but it occurs in other constructions, especially after some nouns and adjectives, e.g.:

der Kampf **ums** Dasein	*the struggle for existence*
Er tat es nur **um** das Geld	He only did it for the money
Er wandte sich an mich **um** Rat	He turned to me for advice
Es ist schade **um** den Verlust	It's a pity about the loss
Es steht schlecht **um** ihren Bruder	Her brother's in a bad way
ein Streit **um** etwas	an argument about sth.
Es ist recht still **um** ihn geworden	*You don't hear anything about him now*

Idiomatically also *Auge um Auge, Zahn um Zahn* 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'.

(f) The prepositional adverb *darum* is used in the meaning 'therefore', 'that's why'

It is an alternative to *deshalb*:

Darum habe ich nicht schreiben können	*That's why I couldn't write*
Sie hatte eine Panne, **darum** ist sie so spät gekommen	*She had a breakdown, that's why she was so late coming*

18.1.7 Less frequent prepositions which govern the accusative

(a) *à* is used in the sense of 'at' (i.e. @), with prices

zehn Paar Schuhe **à** 50 Euro Ten pairs of shoes for 50 euros

This usage is now almost obsolete, and *zu* is now used rather than *à*, see **18.2.9h**.

(b) *betreffend* 'with regard to'

betreffend is used mainly in commercial German. It is an alternative to *betreffs* (+ gen.) and may precede or follow the noun it governs:

betreffend Ihr Schreiben vom 23. Mai *or:* Ihr Schreiben vom 23. Mai **betreffend**

(c) *eingerechnet* 'including'

eingerechnet is used mainly in commercial German. It follows the noun it governs:

meine Unkosten eingerechnet *including my expenses*

(d) *pro* 'per'

pro was originally restricted to commercial language, but it has increasingly come to be used in speech. A common alternative is *je*, see **8.4.1**:

Die Pfirsiche kosten 80 Cent **pro** Stück	*The peaches cost 80 cents each*
Was ist der Preis **pro** Tag?	What is the cost per day?
zwanzig Euro **pro** Person	twenty euros per person
Unsere Reisekosten betragen 3000 Euro **pro/je** Vertreter **pro/je** Monat	*Our travel expenses amount to 3000 euros per representative per month*

As *pro* is most often used without a following adjective or determiner, the case it governs may not be obvious. This has given rise to uncertainty. In practice, when the case used is clear, *pro* is seen to be used quite frequently with the dative rather than the accusative, e.g. ***pro neuem Mitarbeiter***. Occasionally it is used with a nominative, especially with an adjective used as a noun, e.g. ***pro Angestellter***. All these alternatives are accepted as correct.

(e) *wider* 'against'

wider is an obsolete alternative to *gegen*. It is occasionally used in elevated registers, but it occurs most often in a few set phrases:

Diese Unterlassung relativiert alle markigen Worte **wider** den Terrorismus (*Zeit*)	*This omission qualifies all the vigorous speeches against terrorism*
wider (alles) Erwarten	against (all) expectations
wider Willen	against my (his, her, etc.) will
wider besseres Wissen	*against my (his, her, etc.) better judgement*

18.2 Prepositions governing the dative case

Nine common prepositions are used with the dative:

aus **außer** **bei** **gegenüber** **mit** **nach** **seit** **von** **zu**

The following are less frequent and are treated together in **18.2.10**:

ab **binnen** **dank** **entgegen** **entsprechend** **fern** **gemäß** **laut**
(mit)samt **nahe** **nebst** **per** **zufolge** **zuliebe** **zuwider**

18.2.1 *aus*

(a) *aus* most commonly denotes direction 'out of' or 'from' a place

Er kam **aus** dem Haus	*He came out of the house*
Ich sah **aus** dem Fenster (*or* zum Fenster hinaus)	I looked out of the window
Er trank Wodka **aus** einer Tasse	He was drinking vodka from a cup
Sie ging mir **aus** dem Weg	She avoided me
aus der Mode kommen/sein	go/be out of fashion
aus der Übung kommen	*get out of practice*

In practice, this means that ***aus* often corresponds to English 'from'**, and English learners need to distinguish between ***aus*** and ***von***, which can also mean 'from' (see **18.2.8a**).

aus is used with reference to places one has been **in**, with the idea of origin. Its opposite is ***in*** (+ acc.). ***von***, by contrast, is used for 'from' with reference to places one has been **at**, i.e. it expresses the idea of direction. Its opposite is ***zu*** or ***nach***. Compare:

Er kommt **aus** Hamburg	*He comes from Hamburg* (i.e. he

Er kommt **von** Hamburg (i.e. on this occasion)	lives in Hamburg) *He is travelling from Hamburg*
aus dieser Richtung (compare: **in** *diese(r) Richtung* 'in that direction')	from that direction
Dieser Schrank ist **aus** dem 18. Jahrhundert (i.e. it was made **in** the 18th century)	This cupboard is from the 18th century
ein Mädchen **aus** unserer Klasse (i.e. she is **in** our class)	*a girl from our class*

(b) *aus* denotes 'made of' referring to materials

Die Kaffeekanne war **aus** Silber	*The coffee pot was made of silver*
aus Holz, Stahl, Eisen	made of wood, steel, iron
ein Kleid **aus** Wolle	*a woollen dress*

(c) *aus* is used to denote a cause, a reason or a motive

Sie tat es **aus** Dankbarkeit, **aus** Mitleid, **aus** Überzeugung	*She did it out of gratitude, out of sympathy, from conviction*
Ich weiß es **aus** (der) Erfahrung	I know it from experience
Ich frage nur **aus** Interesse	I'm only asking out of interest
aus Furcht vor, Liebe zu etwas	for fear, love of sth.
aus diesem Grund(e)	*for that reason*

For the difference between *aus* and *vor* (+ dat.) to indicate cause, see **18.3.14d**.

(d) Some idiomatic phrases with *aus*

aus erster Hand	*at first hand*
Daraus werde ich nicht klug	*I can't make it out*
Aus dir wird nichts werden	*You'll never come to anything*

18.2.2 *außer*

(a) *außer* usually expresses a restriction (= 'except (for)', 'besides')

Niemand hat ihn gesehen **außer** dem Nachtwächter	*No-one saw him except for the nightwatchman*
Niemand wird es machen können **außer** mir	No-one will be able to do it except for me
Ich konnte nichts sehen **außer** Straßenlichtern	*I couldn't see anything besides street lights*

außer can also be used with the same case as the word to which it refers back, rather than with the dative. The following are acceptable alternatives to the examples above:

Niemand wird es machen können außer **ich**

Ich konnte **nichts** sehen außer **Lichter**

In effect *außer* is being used in such contexts to introduce a phrase in apposition (see **2.6**) rather than as a preposition. It can be used in a similar way before another preposition, e.g. ***Außer*** *bei Regen kann man hier spielen.*

(b) *außer* is used in the meaning 'out of', 'outside'

This sense now occurs chiefly in set phrases, in most of which *außer* is used without a following article:

Die Maschine ist **außer** Betrieb	*The machine is out of service*
außer Kontrolle sein/geraten	be/get out of control
etwas **außer** Acht lassen	disregard sth.
Ich war **außer** mir	I was beside myself

Aber dies war etwas, was ganz **außer** seiner Macht lag (*Musil*)	*But this was something which lay completely beyond his power*

Similarly:

außer Atem	*out of breath*	außer Gefahr	*out of danger*
außer Reichweite	out of range	außer Sicht	out of sight
außer Übung	*out of practice*	außer Zweifel	*beyond doubt*

In one or two elevated idioms *außer* is used with an otherwise obsolete genitive, notably in *außer Landes gehen* 'leave the country'.

With verbs of motion, *außer* can be used with the accusative, although this is only obvious in those rare contexts where a determiner or an adjective is used, e.g. *etwas außer jed* ***en*** *Zweifel setzen.*

18.2.3 *bei*

(a) Referring to place, *bei* usually corresponds to English 'by' or 'at'

(i) In this sense *bei* is less precise than *an* (+ dat.), see **18.3.2a**, meaning 'in the vicinity of' rather than 'adjacent to':

Er stand **bei** mir (= Er stand in meiner Nähe)	*He was standing by/near me*
Bad Homburg liegt **bei** Frankfurt	Bad Homburg is by/near Frankfurt
(dicht) **bei** der Kirche	(right) by the church
Ich habe ihn neulich **beim** Fußballspiel gesehen	*I saw him recently at the football match*

Note that *bei* is always used with battles, e.g. *die Schlacht* **bei** *Hastings.*

(ii) Used with reference to people, *bei* usually means 'at (the house of)'. It is also used to indicate place of employment:

Sie wohnt **bei** ihrer Tante	*She lives at her aunt's*
Ich habe dieses Fleisch **beim** neuen Metzger gekauft	I bought this meat at the new butcher's
Sie arbeitet **bei** der Post, **bei** Bayer	She works at the post office, at Bayer's
bei uns	at our house
bei uns in der Fabrik	*at our works*

bei is not used in standard German to indicate motion **to** somebody's house. Compare: *Sie geht* **zu** *ihrer Tante* 'She's going to her aunt's house'.

(iii) *bei* is used in a number of extended senses with reference to people. This often corresponds to English 'with':

Ich habe mich **bei** ihm entschuldigt/ beschwert	*I apologized/complained to him*
Er hat großen Einfluss **beim** Minister	He has a lot of influence with the minister
Mathe haben wir **bei** Frau Gerstner	We have Frau Gerstner for maths
Hast du deinen Ausweis **bei** dir/ dabei?	Have you got your identity card on you?
Bei Goethe liest man …	*In Goethe's works one reads …*

(b) *bei* can mean 'on the occasion of', 'at'

In this meaning, it is often used with nouns which do not of themselves express time to indicate the time when something took/was taking/will take place:

bei dieser Gelegenheit	*on this occasion*
bei seiner Geburt	at his birth
bei dem bloßen Gedanken	at the very thought
Sie erblasste **bei** der Nachricht	She turned pale at the news

Acht Menschen kamen **bei** diesem Verkehrsunfall ums Leben (*FAZ*)	Eight people were killed in this traffic accident
bei diesem Anblick	at the sight of this
bei einem Glas Wein	*over a glass of wine*

Similarly:

bei der Arbeit	*at work*	beim Fußball	*when playing football*
bei Tisch	at table	bei seinem Tod	at his death
bei schönem Wetter	*if it's fine*	bei diesen Worten	*at these words*

Both *bei* and *auf* (see **18.3.4b**) can be used for English 'at', referring to formal occasions, functions and the like, e.g.:

Ich habe sie **bei** / **auf** ihrer Hochzeit kennen gelernt	*I met her at their wedding*

The difference of meaning is often slight, but in general *bei* points more clearly to the time, rather than the place, of the event.

It is also used in a similar meaning in a few set phrases with nouns expressing time:

Paris **bei** Tag, London **bei** Nacht	*Paris by day, London by night*
bei Tagesanbruch	*at daybreak*
bei Einbruch der Nacht	*at nightfall*
bei Sonnenuntergang	*at sunset*

(c) *bei* often indicates attendant circumstances, meaning 'in view of', 'with'

bei den immer steigenden Preisen	*in view of the constantly rising*

Bei diesem Gehalt kann ich mir keinen neuen Wagen leisten	*prices* With this salary I can't afford a new car
Bei all seinen Verlusten bleibt er ein Optimist	*Despite all his losses he remains an optimist*

(d) *bei* used with the infinitive or other verbal nouns

These combinations have the sense of English 'on …ing' or a subordinate time clause, see **11.4.2b** and **11.6.2d**. This usage is frequent in non-literary written German, but it is not restricted to that register:

beim Schließen der Türen *on shutting the doors*

beim Schlafen, **beim** Essen *while sleeping, eating*

bei seiner Ankunft *on arrival / when he arrived*

bei näherer Überlegung *on closer consideration*

(e) Idiomatic uses of *bei*

Sie war bei guter/schlechter Laune *She was in a good/bad mood*

Sie nannte mich beim Vornamen *She called me by my first name*

Sie nahm mich beim Wort *She took me at my word*

Sie nahm mich bei der Hand *She took me by the hand*

18.2.4 *gegenüber*

In writing, *gegenüber* is increasingly used with a following genitive, e.g. *gegenüber des Theaters*. However, the standard authorities are agreed that only the dative is correct.

(a) The position of *gegenüber*

(i) *gegenüber* always **follows a pronoun**:

Sie saß **mir gegenüber** **Ihr gegenüber** stand ein alter Herr

(ii) *gegenüber* can come **before** or **after a noun**, e.g. *gegenüber alten Menschen* or *alten Menschen gegenübe r*. The position before the noun is now more frequent except in elevated registers:

seine Verantwortung **gegenüber** den chinesischen Web-Nutzern (*MM*)	*its responsibility towards Chinese web users*
Gegenüber dem Rathaus liegt ein Krankenhaus	*Opposite the town hall there is a hospital*

(b) Referring to place, *gegenüber* means 'opposite'

Ich setzte mich ihr **gegenüber** *I sat down opposite her*

Ich wohne **gegenüber** dem Krankenhaus *I live opposite the hospital*

In this sense, *gegenüber* is often used with a following *von*, especially in speech: *Sie saß* **gegenüber von** *mir/Ich wohne* **gegenüber vom** *Krankenhaus*. Using *von* with a pronoun is considered poor style in writing.

gegenüber is often used on its own, as an adverb, e.g. *Sie wohnt gegenüber* / *das Haus gegenüber/die Leute von gegenüber*.

(c) *gegenüber* can express a comparison (= 'compared to')

Depending on the context, *gegen*, see **18.1.4c**, or *neben*, see **18.3.9d**, may be alternatives to *gegenüber* in this sense:

Gegenüber meiner Schwester bin ich groß *I'm tall compared to my sister*

gegenüber dem Vorjahr *compared to last year*

(d) *gegenüber* can mean 'in relation to', 'in respect of', 'towards'

mein Verhalten Astrid **gegenüber**	*my attitude towards Astrid*
Heinrich war vollkommen hilflos Maries Ängsten **gegenüber** (*Böll*)	*Heinrich was completely helpless in the face of Marie's fears*

In this sense, ***gegenüber*** is particularly frequent after nouns and adjectives, where it is an (often more common) alternative to ***gegen***, see **18.1.4f**, or, in some contexts, ***zu***, see **18.2.9g**:

Er handelte durchaus gerecht mir **gegenüber** (*or* gegen mich)	*He acted absolutely fairly towards me*
Seine Güte mir **gegenüber** (*or* zu mir) war rührend	*His kindness towards me was touching*

Similarly:

das Misstrauen gegenüber/gegen *distrust of*

eine Pflicht gegenüber/gegen *a duty towards*

gleichgültig gegenüber/gegen *indifferent towards*

rücksichtsvoll/-los gegenüber/gegen *(in)considerate to*

freundlich gegenüber/zu *kind to(wards)*

18.2.5 *mit*

(a) *mit* corresponds most often to English 'with'

ein Paar Würstchen **mit** Kartoffelsalat *a pair of sausages with potato salad*

Mit ihr spiele ich oft Tennis *I often play tennis with her*

Was ist **mit** dir los? *What's up with you?*

mit großer Freude *with great pleasure*

mit meinem Bruder zusammen *together with my brother*

(b) *mit* indicates the instrument with which an action is performed

This usually corresponds to English 'with'. Note that ***mit*** indicates the **instrument**, whilst ***durch*** indicates the **means** by which an action is carried out, see **18.1.2c**:

Er hat **mit** einem Bleistift geschrieben *He wrote with a pencil*

Er hat den Frosch **mit** einem Messer getötet *He killed the frog with a knife*

German usage sometimes differs from English:

mit Tinte schreiben *write in ink*

mit leiser Stimme *in a low voice*

To refer to a means of transport German uses ***mit*** for English '**by**':

mit der Bahn/ dem Zug	*by rail/train*	**mit** dem Auto	*by car*
mit dem Flugzeug	*by plane*	**mit** der Post	*by post*
Ich bin mit dem Fahrrad gekommen	*I came by bike/on a bike*		

(c) *mit* is commonly used in phrases involving parts of the body

English does not have a preposition in contexts like this, or uses a simple verb:

Sie hat mich **mit** dem Fuß gestoßen *She kicked me*

mit den Achseln zucken *shrug one's shoulders*

(d) Idiomatic uses of *mit*

mit vierzig Jahren *at the age of forty*

mit der Zeit *in (the course of) time*

etwas mit Absicht tun *do sth. on purpose*

mit anderen Worten (m.a.W.) *in other words*

Her damit! (*coll.*) *Give it here!*

Schluss damit! *That's enough!*

mit oder ohne Kinder *with or without children* (see **18.1.5**)

18.2.6 *nach*

(a) *nach* denotes direction, in the sense of English 'to'

See **18.5** for a summary of the German equivalents for English 'to'. In this sense *nach* is only used with:

(i) **neuter names of countries** and **towns** used without an article:

Er geht **nach** Amerika, **nach** Irland, **nach** Bacharach

in is used with names of countries used with an article, see **4.4.1**: *Sie geht in die Schweiz.*

(ii) points of the compass used without an article:

Wir fahren **nach** Norden, Süden, Westen, Osten

in is used when there is an article, which is usually the case if there is an adjective with the noun: *Wir fahren in den sonnigen Süden.*

(iii) **adverbs of place**:

Sie geht **nach** oben, **nach** unten, **nach** vorne, **nach** hinten, **nach** rechts, **nach** links

Also in the phrase *nach Hause gehen* 'go home'.

In North Germany *nach* is often used for *zu*, *an*, *auf* or *in*: *Ich gehe nach* (standard German: *zu*) *meiner Schwester*; *Wir gingen nach dem* (standard German: *auf den, zum*) *Bahnhof.* This is a non-standard regionalism, but North Germans sometimes use it in writing.

(b) *nach* can be used in the sense of 'towards', 'in the direction of'

It can be strengthened by adding *hin*, see **7.2.3**, e.g.:

Er bewegte sich langsam **nach** der Tür	*He moved slowly towards the door*
Ich sah **nach** der Tür (hin)	*I looked towards the door*
nach allen Seiten (hin)	*in all directions*

auf … zu is a frequent alternative in the meaning 'towards', see **18.3.5b**.

(c) Referring to time, *nach* means 'after' or 'later'

Nach vielen Jahren ließen sie sich scheiden	*After many years they got divorced*
Einen Monat nach seiner Verhaftung wurde er freigelassen	A month after his arrest he was released
Nach Ostern studiert sie in Erlangen Chemie	After Easter she's going to study chemistry in Erlangen
bald nach Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts	soon after the beginning of the 17th century
nach einer Weile	after a while
nach Wochen, Jahren	*weeks, years later*

The prepositional adverb ***danach*** can be used to mean 'after(wards)' or 'later'.

(d) *nach* can be used in the sense of 'according to', 'judging by'

Nach meiner Uhr ist es schon halb elf *By my watch it's already half past ten*

nach italienischer Art *in the Italian manner*

nach Ansicht meines Bruders *in my brother's view*

etwas **nach** dem Gewicht verkaufen *sell sth. by weight*

nach besten Kräften *to the best of one's ability*

nach Wunsch *just as I (he, she, etc.) wanted*

In this sense, *nach* can **follow** the noun. In general, this is usual only with certain nouns (some of which it may precede **or** follow) in set phrases:

allem Anschein **nach**	*to all appearances*
diesem Bericht **nach** (in less formal registers usually: *nach diesem Bericht*)	according to this report
	according to size
	in my opinion

der Größe **nach** (also commonly: *nach der Größe*)	I only know her by name
meiner Meinung **nach** (also: *nach meiner Meinung*)	in turns
Ich kenne sie nur dem Namen **nach**	*Judging by his accent Herr Oettinger comes from Swabia*
der Reihe **nach**	
Seiner Aussprache **nach** kommt Herr Oettinger aus Schwaben	

In formal registers there are a few other prepositions which are used to mean 'according to', i.e. *entsprechend*, *gemäß*, *laut* and *zufolge*, see **18.2.10e**.

18.2.7 *seit*

***seit* marks a period of time beginning in the past and continuing to the present** or a more recent point in the past. It corresponds to English 'since' or 'for':

Er ist **seit** drei Wochen hier	*He's been here for three weeks*
Ich wartete **seit** einer halben Stunde auf dem Marktplatz	I had been waiting in the market-place for half an hour
Seit wann bist du wieder zu Hause?	Since when have you been back home?
Seit seiner Krankheit habe ich ihn nicht mehr gesehen	I haven't seen him again since his illness
Erst **seit** kurzem gibt es Sondertarife nach Ägypten	*There have only been special fares to Egypt for a short while*

For the use of tenses with *seit* 'for', see **12.1.2** and **12.2.4a**.

An accusative phrase with *schon* is a possible alternative to *seit* 'for', e.g. *Er ist schon drei Wochen hier*, see **9.1.29**.

18.2.8 *von*

(a) *von* indicates direction 'from' a place

(i) In this sense, ***von* is the opposite of *zu***, which indicates direction towards, see **18.2.9**:

Ich fuhr **von** Frankfurt nach München	*I went from Frankfurt to Munich*
Sie bekam einen Brief **von** mir	She received a letter from me
Sie kommt **von** ihrer Schwester	She's coming from her sister's
Ich wohne zehn Minuten **vom** Bahnhof (entfernt)	I live ten minutes from the station
Die Blätter fallen **von** den Bäumen	*The leaves are falling from the trees*

For the difference between *von* and *aus* as equivalents of English 'from', see **18.2.1a**.

(ii) ***v** on* can be strengthened by **adding *aus*** after the noun to **emphasize the point of origin**:

Von meinem Fenster (**aus**) kann ich die Paulskirche sehen	*I can see St. Paul's church from my window*
Er ist **von** Bern (**aus**) mit dem Nachtzug nach Lissabon gefahren	*He travelled by the night train from Bern to Lisbon*

von … aus also occurs in a few idiomatic phrases:

Er war **von** Haus **aus** Lehrer	*He was originally a teacher*
von mir **aus**	as far as I'm concerned
von Natur **aus**	*by nature*

(iii) **Direction from a point** can be emphasized by adding *her* (see **7.2.5**):

Eine Stimme kam **von** oben **her** *A voice came from above*

Ich komme **von** meiner Schwester **her** *I am coming from my sister's*

von … her is now commonly (and fashionably) used in the sense 'in respect of', 'from the point of view of', 'regarding'. This is in effect a contraction of the phrase *von … her betrachte t*:

Von Beruf **her** ist er Schlosser	*As for his job, he's a mechanic*
Besonders raffiniert **von** der Farbe **her**	Particularly subtle in respect of the colouring
Von der Zielsetzung **her** sind wir der gleichen Meinung	*We're of the same opinion in respect of our objectives*

Occasionally, *her* is omitted in these contexts: *Von der Zielsetzung sind wir der gleichen Meinung.*

(b) *von* means 'from' referring to time

von indicates a starting-point in time. It corresponds to English 'from' and is often strengthened by a following *an*:

Von 1991 (an) hat sie in Rostock gelebt	*From 1991 she lived in Rostock*
Von kommendem Montag an kostet das Benzin 10 Cent mehr pro Liter	From next Monday petrol will cost 10 cents a litre more
von Anfang an	(right) from the start
von neun Uhr an	from nine o'clock (on)
von nun an	from now on
von der Zeit an	from then on
von Anfang bis Ende	from beginning to end
von heute auf morgen	from one day to the next, overnight
von vornherein	from the outset, from the first
von jeher/ **von** alters her	from time immemorial, always
von Jugend auf	from his (my, etc.) youth
von Zeit zu Zeit	*from time to time*

(c) *von* marks the agent in passive constructions

Details about the use of *von* with the passive, and the difference between *von* and *durch* as equivalents of English 'by' are given in section **13.3a**.

von is also used in this sense, corresponding to English 'by', to mark authorship and the like, e.g. *ein Roman von Daniel Kehlmann*, *eine Oper von Wagner*, *ein Gemälde von Caspar David Friedrich*.

(d) A phrase with *von* is often used in place of a genitive

i.e. for English 'of', e.g. *ein Ereignis* **von** *weltgeschichtlicher Bedeutung*. This usage is explained in **2.4**.

(e) *von* has a wide range of figurative uses

(i) It often corresponds to English 'of' in the sense of 'on the part of':

Das war sehr nett, liebenswürdig, vernünftig **von** ihr	*That was very nice, kind, sensible of her*
Das war doch dumm **von** mir	That was silly of me, wasn't it?
Er tat es **von** selbst	*He did it of his own accord*

(ii) Some common idiomatic phrases with *von*:

Das ist nicht von ungefähr passiert	*It didn't happen by accident*
Das kommt davon	*That's what comes of it*
Das gilt nicht von ihm	*That's not true of him*
Ich kenne sie nur vom Sehen	*I only know her by sight*
von ganzem Herzen	*with all my heart*
Das versteht sich von selbst	*That is self-explanatory*

18.2.9 *zu*

(a) *zu* expresses direction

It is a common equivalent for English 'to', particularly:

(i) going to a person('s house):

Er geht **zu** seinem Onkel, **zu** Müllers, **zum** Frisör

For 'at'(a person's house), ***bei*** is used, see **18.2.3**.

(ii) going to a place or an occasion:

Dieser Bus fährt **zum** Bahnhof	*This bus goes to the station*
Ich ging **zur** Kirche und wartete dort auf sie	I went to the church and waited for her there
Wir machten einen Ausflug **zum** Dorf	We went on an outing to the village
Sie kehrte **zu** ihrer Arbeit zurück	She returned to her work
eine Expedition **zum** Mond	an expedition to the moon
Sie geht morgen **zu** einem Kongress	*She's going to a conference tomorrow*

zu* is the opposite of *von, see **18.2.8a**, and puts the emphasis on the **general direction** rather than reaching the destination. For the distinction between *zu* and the more specific prepositions *an*, *auf* or *in* (with the accusative) as an equivalent of English 'to', see **18.5**.

zu can be strengthened by adding *hin* after the noun, see **7.2.3**, e.g. *Sie ging zur Post* (*hin*) . *Er blickte zur Decke* (*hin*). The effect is to emphasize the direction, so that ***zu* ... *hin*** is a common equivalent for English 'towards'.

(iii) in some idiomatic phrases:

Sie sah **zum** Fenster/ **zur** Tür **hinaus** *She looked out of the window/the door*

Setzen Sie sich doch **zu** uns! *Do come and join us*

(b) *zu* sometimes refers to a place

i.e. with the meaning of English 'at' or 'in'. This sense of *zu* used to be common, especially with names of towns, but it is now obsolete except in elevated registers, as modern German prefers *in*:

J.S. Bach wurde **zu** (*more usually*: in) Eisenach geboren	*J.S. Bach was born in Eisenach*
der Dom **zu** Köln (*more usually*: der Kölner Dom)	*Cologne cathedral*

However, *zu* is still used in this sense in some common set phrases, e.g.:

zu Hause *at home*

zu beiden Seiten *on either side*

(c) *zu* is used in certain time expressions

(i) with the major festivals:

zu Weihnachten zu Pfingsten zu Ostern zu Neujahr

(ii) with ***Zeit*** and **Stunde**

With *Zeit* and *Stunde*, both *zu* and *in* are used, in different contexts.

zu is used in contexts denoting **one or more specific points or limited periods of time**:

zur Zeit der letzten Wahlen	*at the time of the last election*
zu der Zeit, **zu** dieser Zeit	at that time
zu der Zeit, als du hier warst	at the time when you were here
zu einer anderen Zeit	at some other time
zu jeder Zeit	at all times, at any time
zu jeder Tageszeit	at any time of the day

zu gewissen Zeiten	at certain times
zur gewohnten Zeit	at the usual time
gerade noch **zur** rechten Zeit	in the nick of time
zu gleicher Zeit	at the same time, simultaneously
Zu meiner Zeit war das alles anders	In my time that was all different
zu dieser Stunde	at this hour
zu jeder Stunde	at any time
zur selben Stunde	*at the same hour*

also: ***zu*** *diesem Zeitpunkt* 'at this point in time'.

in is used to denote a **period within or after which something occurs**, or in phrases which are felt to denote **duration** rather than a point or limited period in time:

In all **der** Zeit (*or* In der ganzen Zeit) haben wir sie nicht gesehen	*In all that time we didn't see her*
In kurzer Zeit war er wieder da	In a short time he was back again
In unserer Zeit tut man das nicht mehr	In our times that is no longer done
in einer Zeit, in der die Städte wachsen	at a time when towns are growing
in einer solchen Zeit wie heute	at a time like the present
in früheren Zeiten	in earlier times
in künftigen Zeiten	in times to come
in der ersten Zeit	at first
in ruhigen Stunden	in peaceful hours
in elfter Stunde	*at the eleventh hour*

(iii) with ***Mal***, e.g. ***zum*** *ersten Mal*, ***zum*** *zehnten Mal*, etc. (see **8.4.3**)

(d) *zu* can express purpose

(i) In these contexts ***zu*** is the equivalent of English 'for':

zu diesem Zweck	*for this purpose*
Das ist kein Anlass **zur** Klage	That is no cause for complaint
Was gibt es heute **zum** Nachtisch?	What's for dessert today?
Stoff **zu** einem neuen Anzug	material for a new suit
Zum Geburtstag hat er mir eine Uhr geschenkt	He bought me a watch for my birthday
Wir hatten keine Gelegenheit **zu** einem Gespräch	*We didn't have a chance for a talk*

The prepositional adverb ***dazu*** can be used to mean 'for that purpose', e.g. ***Dazu*** *soll man ein scharfes Messer gebrauchen.* Compare also *Wozu?* 'To what purpose?', 'What for?'

(ii) In this sense, *zu* is very common with an infinitive used as a noun, or with other verbal nouns, where English uses 'for …ing' or an infinitive with 'to', see **11.4.2d** and **11.6.2b**. It is typical of written non-literary German, but it is by no means confined to that register.

Wozu gebraucht man dieses Messer? **Zum** Kartoffelschälen.	*What do you use this knife for? For peeling potatoes/To peel potatoes*
Hier gibt es viele Möglichkeiten **zum** Schilaufen	There are lots of possibilities for skiing here
Ich sage dir das **zu** deiner Beruhigung	*I'm telling you this to reassure you*

(iii) In certain contexts, this sense of *zu* approaches that of *als*, i.e. 'by way of', as:

Er murmelte etwas **zur** Antwort *He muttered something by way of reply*

Er tat es mir **zu** Gefallen *He did it as a favour to me*

Similarly:

zur Abwechslung	*for a change*	zum Scherz	*as a joke*
zum Andenken an	in memory of	zum Spaß	as a joke
	for example	zur Strafe	as a punishment

zum Beispiel	*if necessary, at a*	zum Vergnügen	*for pleasure*
zur Not	*pinch*		

(e) In some contexts *zu* indicates a result or an effect

The English equivalent is most often 'to':

Zu meinem Erstaunen hat sie die	*To my surprise she passed the exam*
Prüfung bestanden	

Similarly:

zu meiner Befriedigung	*to my satisfaction*
zu meiner großen Freude	*to my great pleasure*
Es ist zum Lachen, zum Heulen,	*It is laughable, enough to make one*
zum Verrücktwerden	*weep, enough to drive one mad*

zu is very frequent in this sense in the prepositional object of verbs, see **16.5.13.**

(f) *zu* can express a change of state

This usage occurs in conjunction with a small number of verbs or nouns:

Sie wählten ihn **zum** Präsidenten	*They elected him President*
Er wurde **zum** Major befördert	*He was promoted to major*
Ich habe es mir **zur** Regel gemacht,	*I've made it a rule to do this*
dies zu tun	

Similarly with: *bestimmen* 'destine to be', *degradieren* 'demote', *ernennen* 'appoint', *krönen* 'crown', *weihen* 'ordain', *werden* 'become' (see **16.6.1**), etc. and the nouns *die Beförderung* 'promotion', *die Ernennung* 'appointment', *die Wahl* 'election', etc.

(g) *zu* can express a mental attitude towards someone or something

(i) This is frequent with adjectives, see **6.4.1**, e.g.:

Sie war sehr freundlich **zu** mir *She was very kind to me*

Similarly:

frech zu	*impudent towards*	nett zu	*nice to*
gut zu	good, kind to	respektvoll zu	respectful to
(un)höflich zu	*(im)polite to*	unfreundlich zu	*unkind to*

(ii) also with **some nouns**, e.g.:

Er hatte keine freundschaftlichen Beziehungen **zu** diesen Menschen *He was not on friendly terms with these people*

ihre Einstellung **zur** Wiedervereinigung *her attitude to reunification*

seine Liebe **zu** ihr *his love for her*

das Verhältnis des Einzelnen **zum** Staat *the relationship of the individual to the state*

gegen (see **18.1.4f**) and ***gegenüber*** (see **18.2.4d**) can also denote attitude towards or relations with someone or something. Whether *gegen* or *zu* is used depends on the particular noun or adjective, though *gegen* tends to occur with those which denote hostile attitudes, *zu* with

those which denote friendly attitudes. A few adjectives can be used with either, e.g.:

gerecht zu/gegen	*fair, just to*	hart zu/gegen	*hard towards*
grausam zu/gegen	*cruel to*		

gegen is used with some nouns although the related adjective has *zu*, e.g. *die Frechheit, die Gerechtigkeit, die Grausamkeit, die Härte, die (Un)höflichkeit gegen jdn.* ***gegenüber*** is a common alternative to *gegen* or *zu* with most adjectives or nouns which occur with these prepositions.

(h) Uses of *zu* with numbers

(i) to indicate price or measure:

10 Stück Seife **zu** je 4 Euro *10 bars of soap at 4 euros each*

5 Päckchen Kaffee **zu** hundert Gramm *5 hundred gram packs of coffee*

zum halben Preis *at half price*

Also with fractions, etc. *zur Hälfte, zum Teil, zu einem Drittel fertig*

(ii) With the dative of the cardinal or the stem of the ordinal to indicate groups, e.g. *zu zweien*, *zu zweit*, see **8.1.3b**.

(iii) With the declined ordinal number for 'first(ly)', 'secondly', etc., e.g. *zum Ersten*, *zum Zweiten*, etc., see **8.2e**.

(i) Idiomatic uses of *zu*

jdn. zum Besten haben *make a fool of sb.*

zu Boden fallen *fall to the ground*

sich (*dat.*) etwas zu eigen machen *adopt sth.*

zu Ende gehen *draw to a close*

zu Fuß *on foot*

jdn. zu Rate ziehen *ask sb.'s advice*

jdn. zur Rechenschaft ziehen *call sb. to account*

zur Sache kommen *come to the point*

jdm. zur Seite stehen *give sb. one's support*

zur Welt kommen *be born*

18.2.10 Less frequent prepositions governing the dative

Several less frequently used prepositions are followed by the dative case. Most of them are characteristic of formal written registers.

(a) *ab* 'from'

ab was originally restricted to commercial and official German, but has become common in all registers. The case use with *ab* varies. When referring to place, it is always used with the dative, but when referring to time, the accusative is used as frequently as the dative if no article follows.

(i) Referring to **place**, it is an alternative to *von*, but it emphasizes the starting point more strongly:

Ab Jericho folgten wir einer langen Kolonne israelischer Touristenbusse	*From Jericho we followed a long convoy of Israeli tourist buses*
(*Zeit*)	
Dieser Sondertarif gilt **ab** allen deutschen Flughäfen	This special fare applies from all airports in Germany
ab Fabrik	*ex works*

(ii) Referring to **time**, *ab* is used in the meaning 'from' and is an alternative to *von … a n*. If it is used without a following determiner (as is usually the case, see **4.10**), both the dative and the accusative are found and considered equally correct:

ab neun Uhr, **ab** heute	*from nine o'clock, from today*
ab sofort	with immediate effect
ab ersten/erstem Mai	from the first of May
ab kommende(r) Woche	from next week
ab nächsten/nächstem Monat	*from next month*

If there is a definite article, then the dative must be used:

ab dem ersten Mai	*from the first of May*
ab dem 21. Lebensjahr	*from the age of 21*

(b) *binnen* indicates a period of time (= 'within')

It is used, especially in writing, to avoid the potential ambiguity of *in*, see **18.3.7b**:

binnen einem Jahr, drei Jahren *within a year, three years*

binnen kurzem *shortly*

In formal registers *binnen* is occasionally used with a following genitive, e.g. *binnen eines Jahres*.

In Switzerland *innert* is often used for *binnen*, with a following dative or (occasionally) a genitive, e.g. *innert einem/eines Jahres*.

(c) *dank* 'thanks to'

dank now occurs as frequently with a following genitive in writing, especially in the plural and with verbal nouns:

dank seinem Einfluss/seines Einflusses *thanks to his influence*

dank des schnellen Einsatzes der Feuerwehr (*BrZ*) *thanks to rapid action by the fire brigade*

dank seiner Sprachkenntnisse *thanks to his knowledge of languages*

(d) *entgegen* 'contrary to'

It can occur before or (rather less frequently) after the noun:

entgegen allen Erwartungen/ *contrary to all expectations*

allen Erwartungen **entgegen**

In writing, *entgegen* is quite widely found with a genitive, e.g. *entgegen des allgemeinen Trends* (*BrZ*), although this usage is considered incorrect.

(e) *entsprechend, gemäß, laut, zufolge* 'according to'

These prepositions are typical of formal registers. They all mean 'according to', as does the more frequent *nach*, see **18.2.6d**, but they are not interchangeable in all contexts. It is not uncommon for *entsprechend* and *gemäß* to be used with a genitive, although this usage is not (yet) regarded as correct.

(i) ***entsprechend*** means 'in accordance with'. It can precede or (more commonly) follow the noun:

dem neuen Trend **entsprechend** / *in accordance with the recent trend*

entsprechend dem neuen Trend

(ii) ***gemäß*** usually follows the noun, but occasionally precedes it. It

means ‘in accordance with’:

Die Maschine wurde den Anweisungen *The machine was put into operation*

gemäß in Betrieb gesetzt *in accordance with the instructions*

(iii) ***laut*** introduces a verbatim report of something said or written. It is normally used without a following article, see **4.10**:

Laut Berichten soll der Präsident neue *According to reports the president has proposed*

Verhandlungen vorgeschlagen haben *fresh negotiations*

laut Gesetz *according to the law*

laut Wladimir Putin *according to Vladimir Putin*

If the following noun is used with an article (or an adjective), it is often in the genitive rather than the dative:

laut des Berichtes/dem Bericht aus Berlin *according to the report from Berlin*

laut neuer Berichte/neuen Berichten *according to recent reports*

laut ämtlichem Nachweis/ämtlichen *according to an official attestation*

Nachweises

(iv) ***zufolge*** follows the noun. In accepted usage it indicates a consequence:

Dem Vertrag **zufolge** werden nun große Mengen von Rohöl geliefert	*In accordance with/following the contract large quantities of crude oil are now being delivered*

zufolge is now widely used where there is no sense of a consequence or

a result, although not all authorities consider this acceptable:

unbestätigen Berichten **zufolge** *according to unconfirmed reports*

einem Regierungssprecher **zufolge** *according to a government spokesman*

The use of *zufolge* with a following noun in the genitive, e.g. *zufolge des Vertrages*, is now obsolete and *infolge* (+ gen.) is used instead.

(f) *fern* 'far from'

fern can occur before or (rather less frequently) after the noun:

Sie blieben **fern** der Heimat/der Heimat fern	*They remained far from home*
Europa liegt immer noch **fern** dem britischen Horizont (*Zeit*)	*Europe is still far removed from British horizons*

In practice the most usual equivalent of English 'far from' are *fern von* or *weit von*.

(g) *mitsamt* and *samt* 'together with'

These are sometimes used with a following genitive. The usual equivalent for 'together with' is *zusammen mit*, or often simply *mit*:

Der Beamte verschwand **mitsamt** den *The policeman disappeared together with*

Dokumenten (*FR*) *the documents*

Neben Marihuana entdeckten die Beamten *Apart from marihuana the policemen discovered a*

im Wagen eine Pumpgun **samt** *pump-action shotgun in the car together with*

scharfer Munition (*Lux*) *live ammunition*

(h) *nahe* 'near (to)'

is used mainly in formal registers:

ein altes Haus **nahe** dem freien Feld (*FR*) *an old house near the open field*

When used in an abstract sense *nahe* commonly follows the noun:

Sie war der Verzweiflung **nahe** *She was close to despair*

(i) nebst 'together with', 'in addition to'

nebst is used exclusively in formal registers. It occasionally appears with the genitive, but this is considered incorrect:

eine sehr gute Bibliographie **nebst** einem hilfreichen Lexikon der philosophischen Schlüsselbegriffe (*SZ*)	*a very good bibliography in addition to a useful glossary of the key philosophical concepts*

(j) *per* 'per', 'by'

per was originally only used in commercial language, but it is used increasingly in spoken and other less formal registers. When used with a means of transport it is an alternative to more usual *mit*, see **18.2.5b**:

per Post (= mit der Post) *by post*

per Bahn (= mit der Bahn) *by rail*

per Luftfracht *by air*

per Einschreiben *by recorded mail*

per Adresse (p.A.) *c/o*

per Anhalter fahren *to hitchhike*

mit jdm. per du sein *be on first name terms with sb.* (i.e. *use* 'du' *to them*)

Sie bezahlen erst per 31. Dezember *You do not pay until 31 December*

Die Waren sind per 1. Mai bestellt *The goods are ordered for 1 May*

As *per* is most often used without a following adjective or determiner, the case it governs is often not obvious. This has given rise to uncertainty, and in practice, when a case is clear, *per* is actually seen to be used with the accusative as well as the dative, e.g. *per zweiten/zweitem Bildungsweg*. Either usage is regarded as correct.

(k) *zuliebe* 'for the sake of' follows the noun it governs

Ich habe es meiner Mutter **zuliebe** getan *I did it for my mother's sake*

Dir **zuliebe** gibt es Spargel *Just for you, we're having asparagus*

wahrscheinlich dem Wald **zuliebe** (*Walser*) *probably for the sake of the forest*

(l) *zuwider* 'contrary to' follows the noun it governs

It is an emphatic alternative to *gegen* in formal registers:

Karl handelte seinem Befehl **zuwider** *Karl acted contrary to his order*

18.3 Prepositions governing the accusative

or the dative case

Nine prepositions govern the accusative *or* the dative:

an	**hinter**	**neben**	**unter**	**zwischen**
auf	**in**	**über**	**vor**	

General rules governing the use of the accusative and the dative with these prepositions are given in **18.3.1**, and the individual prepositions are dealt with in the following sections.

For the more common ones (i.e. ***an***, ***auf***, ***in***, ***über***, ***unter*** and ***vor***) the use with the accusative and the dative is treated separately.

18.3.1 The use of the accusative and the dative

These nine prepositions govern the **accusative case** if they indicate **direction**, but the **dative** if they indicate **position**.

It is often claimed that the accusative case is used with these prepositions when motion is involved, but it is more precise to say that the accusative case is used with a phrase expressing the direction in which someone or something is moving or being put, whilst the dative normally indicates that someone or something is stationary.

Ich hänge das Bild an **die** Wand *I'm hanging the picture on the wall*

Das Bild hängt an **der** Wand *The picture is hanging on the wall*

Wir gingen in **dieses** Zimmer hinein *We went into this room*

Wir essen in **diesem** Zimmer *We eat in this room*

In some contexts the reason for the choice of case is less obvious, or usage is variable.

(a) The dative case is sometimes used when a direction is involved

However, in these contexts there is **no movement in relation to the person or thing** denoted by the following noun:

Er ging neben **seinem** Freund *He was walking next to his friend*

(He and his friend are moving with equal speed in the same direction)

Er ging zwischen **seinen** Eltern *He was walking between his parents*

(His position is constant in relation to his parents)

Ein Flugzeug kreiste über **der** Stadt *A plane was circling over the town*

(Though it was moving, it stayed over the town)

Usage where two prepositional phrases occur in the same sentence with a verb of motion follows the basic principle, e.g. *Elke legte sich auf* **eine** *Bank* **im** *Schatten hin*. Elke is moving in the direction of the bench, but the bench is stationary in relation to the shadow.

(b) The dative is used with verbs of arriving, appearing and disappearing

Sie kamen **am** Bahnhof an *They arrived at the station*

Sie landeten auf **dem** Mond *They landed on the moon*

Er kroch unter **dem** Tisch hervor *He crept out from under the table*

Sie erschien hinter **der** Theke *She appeared behind the counter*

Sie verbarg sich unter **der** Decke *She hid under the sheet*

Der Reiter verschwand hinter **dem** Berg *The horseman disappeared behind the hill*

German does not consider that such verbs indicate a direction, so that,

in the last example, the hill is perceived as the place **where** the horseman disappeared. However, there can be times when the speaker perceives there to be movement in a particular direction with these verbs and uses the accusative, e.g. *Er verschwand plötzlich über* **das** *Dach*. Nevertheless, such contexts are rare.

(c) Different usage with some simple and prefixed verbs

In a few cases, these prepositions are used with the **accusative** after a **simple verb**, but with the **dative** after a related **prefixed verb**. With the prefixed verbs, the action is seen as already completed, whereas with the simple verbs it is visualized as ongoing:

(**an** / **fest**) **binden** *tie, fasten*

Das Pferd war an **einen** Baum gebunden

Das Pferd war an **einem** Baum an-/festgebunden

(**vor**) **fahren** *drive (up)*

Der Wagen fuhr vor **den** Bahnhof

Der Wagen fuhr vor **dem** Schloss vor

(**auf**) **hängen** *hang (up)*

Sie hängte das Bild an **die** Wand

Sie hängte das Bild an **der** Wand auf

sich (**fest**) **klammern** *cling to*

Er klammerte sich an **sie**

Er klammerte sich an **ihr** fest

sich (**nieder**) **legen**, - **setzen** *lie, sit down*

Sie legte/setzte sich auf **die** Bank

Sie legte/setzte sich auf **der** Bank nieder

(**auf**) **schreiben** *write (down)*

Ich schrieb ihre Adresse in **mein** Notizbuch

Ich schrieb ihre Adresse in **meinem** Notizbuch auf

(d) Verbs with the prefix *ein-*

(i) Many verbs with the prefix *ein-* are often followed by a **phrase with *in*** , **in the accusative case**:

Sie stieg in **den** Zug ein Wir weihten ihn in **das** Geheimnis ein

Ich trug den Namen in **die** Liste ein Er wickelte sich in **eine** Decke ein

(ii) A noun phrase in the accusative case is used even in the ***sein*** - **passive**, although here usage is variable:

Er war in **eine** Reisedecke eingehüllt Sie ist in **das** Geheimnis eingeweiht

Sein Name war in **die** / **der** Liste eingetragen

(iii) ***sich einschließen*** is used with either case depending on whether the movement in a particular direction is emphasized: *Sie schloss sich in* **ihr** / ***ihrem*** *Zimmer ein.*

(iv) ***sich einfinden***, ***einkehren*** and ***eintreffen*** are followed by a preposition with a noun phrase in the dative case, as they denote arrival (see **(a)** above):

Wir trafen in **der** Hauptstadt ein *We arrived in the capital*

Sie kehrten in **einer** Gaststätte ein *They turned in at an inn*

(e) With a few verbs usage is idiomatic

In the main these are verbs which do not denote movement as such. The choice of case depends on how native speakers envisage the action, and it can vary. If no preposition is indicated in the examples below, the verb is commonly used with more than one (e.g. *sehen*, which occurs with *an*, *auf*, *in*, etc.).

(i) A noun phrase in the **dative** case is usual in conjunction with the following verbs:

anbringen *fix*	befestigen an *fasten*	drucken *print*	notieren *note*

(ii) A noun phrase in the **accusative** case is usual in conjunction with the following verbs:

anbauen an	*build on to*	kleiden in	*clothe in*	verteilen	*distribute*
anschließen	*add on*	münden in	*flow into*	vertieft in	*engrossed in*
gebeugt über	*bent over*	sehen, schauen	*look*	verwickelt in	*involved in*
grenzen an	*border on*	stützen auf	*support*		

(f) A few verbs have different meanings when used with the dative and the accusative

aufnehmen A noun phrase in the accusative case implies complete acceptance; in the dative case it implies that the acceptance is temporary:

Er ist **in den** Chor aufgenommen worden *He was admitted into the choir*

Ich wurde **in seiner** Familie sehr freundlich aufgenommen *I was very amicably received into his family*

einführen If there is an idea of direction, a noun phrase in the accusative case is used, whereas a noun phrase in the dative puts the stress on the place:

Waren **in ein** Land einführen *to import goods into a country*

(e.g. **nach** Italien)

Er will die Sitte in diesem Land einführen *He wants to introduce the custom into that country*

(i.e. **in** Italien)

halten If the gesture is emphasized, a noun phrase in the accusative is used, whilst a noun phrase in the dative emphasizes the position:

Er hielt das Buch in **die** Höhe *He held the book up in the air*

Er hielt das Buch in der Hand *He held the book in his hand*

klopfen A noun phrase in the accusative is the norm, but in the context of knocking on doors, etc., the dative can be used if the emphasis is on the place rather than the action:

Er klopfte **an die** Tür/ **auf den** Tisch *He knocked on the door/the table*

Da klopfte es **an der** Haustür *There was a knock at the front door*

(i.e. the front door rather than somewhere else)

schreiben A noun phrase in the accusative case refers to the action of writing down, but the dative case is used if the place where something is written is uppermost:

Er schrieb es **in sein** Heft *He wrote it (down) in his notebook*

In seinem Brief schreibt er, dass … *He writes in his letter that …*

(g) Idiomatic use

If these prepositions **do not have their literal meaning** they are used only or predominantly with a **single case**.

In idiomatic uses, ***auf*** and ***über*** are used only with the **accusative**, all **the other prepositions** mainly with the **dative**.

This is particularly evident where these prepositions are used to refer to **time**, where they are used in **prepositional objects**, see **16.5**, with **adjectives**, see **6.4**, and in all other contexts where they are not used in their literal senses.

18.3.2 *an* (+ dative)

(a) The basic meaning of *an* with the dative is 'on (the side of)'

(i) This contrasts with *auf* (+ dat.), which means 'on (top of)'. *an* (+ dat.) can correspond to English 'on', or, if the person or thing is not actually touching, 'at', 'by' or 'along'. See **18.2.3a** for the distinction between *an* (+ dat.) and *bei* in the sense of 'at':

Das Bild hing **an** der Wand *The picture was hanging on the wall*

am Berg *on the mountain(side)*

(compare: ***auf*** *dem Berg* 'on the mountain-top')

An der Grenze wird kontrolliert *There's a check at the border*

Wir warteten **an** der Bushaltestelle *We were waiting at/by the bus stop*

am Fluss *on the river(side)*

(compare: ***auf*** *dem Fluss* 'on the river' (i.e. in a boat))

Ich stand **am** Fenster *I was standing by/at the window*

Sie wohnt **am** See *She lives by the lake*

(ii) *an* (+ dat.) is also used for 'on (the underside of)':

Die Lampe hängt **an** der Decke *The lamp was hanging from the ceiling*

am Himmel *in the sky*

(compare: ***im*** *Himmel* 'in heaven')

(iii) *an* (+ dat.) is used with institutions at which a person is employed:

Sie lehrt **an** der Universität Augsburg *She teaches at the University of Augsburg*

Er ist Intendant **am** Staatstheater *He is director at the State Theatre*

Er ist Pfarrer **an** der Peterskirche *He is the pastor at St. Peter's*

(iv) In older German, *an* was often used in the sense of 'down on', and this is still apparent in some set phrases like *am Boden* 'on the ground', where *auf* is a possible alternative. Compare also *am Strand* 'on the beach', *am Ufer* 'on the bank', etc.

(v) *an* (+ dat.) is used in three phrases together with an adverb following the noun. In all these the dative is used since, although movement is involved, there is no indication of direction:

- **an** (+ dat.) ... ***hin*** expresses movement alongside (see also **7.2.5**):

Sie gehen **an** der Mauer **hin** *They are walking along the wall*

- **an** (+ dat.) ... ***vorbei*** means 'past':

Wir gehen **an** seinem Haus **vorbei** *We are walking past his house*

- **an** (+ dat.) ... **entlang** means 'along', see **18.4.2b**.

(b) *an* (+ dat.) is used in a number of time expressions

(i) *an* is used with nouns denoting days and parts of the day. It is always followed by a noun in the dative case when referring to time, and the definite article is always used with nouns in the singular, see **4.5c**. In most contexts it corresponds to English 'in' or 'on':

am Tag	*in the daytime*
am Montag, **am** Dienstag, ...	*on Monday, on Tuesday, ...*
an Wochentagen	*on weekdays*
am Morgen, **am** Nachmittag, **am** Abend	in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening
am 31. Oktober (see **8.5.3b**)	*on the 31st of October*

(ii) *an* is used with *Tag*, etc. even in contexts where English has no

preposition:

am Tag nach seinem Tod	*the day after his death*
An diesem Morgen war er schlecht gelaunt	That morning he was in a bad mood
am anderen Tag, **am** anderen Morgen	*the next day, the next morning*

(iii) *an* occurs in a few other contexts with reference to time:

Es ist **an** der Zeit, dass …	*It is about time that …*
am Anfang, **am** Ende	*at the beginning, at the end*
gleich **am** Anfang	*at the very beginning*

(iv) Other notes on usage:

• **in** is used with *Nacht*, see **18.3.7b**.

• An accusative time phrase is often an alternative to a phrase with *an*, especially in spoken German, see **2.2.2**.

• Combinations of the days of the week and nouns denoting parts of the day are written together, e.g. *am Donnerstagabend*.

(c) *an* (+ dat.) can be used to mean 'in respect of', 'in connection with'

This meaning is common in prepositional objects (see **16.5.2a**), and with nouns and adjectives (see **6.4.1**):

Der Bedarf **an** Arbeitskräften verringert sich	*The demand for labour is decreasing*
Wir haben mehrere Millionen Euros **an**	*We have several million euros worth*

Aufträgen vorliegen *of orders on the books*

Sie hat etwas Eigenartiges **an** sich *There's something strange about her*

Das Schönste **an** der Sache ist, dass … *The best thing about it is that …*

an (+ dat.) also often indicates the feature **by** which one recognizes or notices something:

Ich bemerkte **an** seinem Benehmen, dass … *I noticed from his behaviour that …*

Sie erkannte ihn **an** seinem Bart *She recognized him by his beard*

(d) *an* (+ dat.) can indicate a partially completed action

This often provides a way of indicating progressive action, see **12.5d**:

Er strickt **an** einem Pullover *He's knitting a pullover*

Sie arbeitet **an** ihrer Dissertation *She's working on her thesis*

(e) Other uses of *an* (+ dat.)

(i) *am* is used to form the superlative of adverbs and predicate adjectives, e.g. *am schönsten*, *am einfachsten*, see **6.5.3a**.

(ii) is used in informal registers with the infinitive to express a continuous action, e.g. *Sie ist am Schreiben*, see **12.5c**.

18.3.3 *an* (+ accusative)

(a) *an* (+ acc.) indicates direction if the destination is *an*

(+ dat.)

i.e. in contexts where the ultimate destination is a position 'on', 'at' or 'by' something.

(i) It most often corresponds to English 'to' (see **18.5.1c**) or 'on':

Sie hängte das Bild **an** die Wand *She hung the picture on the wall*

Sie fuhr **an** die Küste *She drove to the coast*

Ich ging **ans** Fenster, **an** die Tür, **an** seinen Platz

Er kam **an** die Bushaltestelle, **an** den Waldrand

(ii) The idea of **right up to** somebody or something can be indicated by adding ***heran***, see **7.2.4b**:

Sie trat **an** mich, **an** den Tisch **heran** *She walked up to me, to the table*

(iii) *an* is also used with a person being addressed, for example being asked a question or requested to do something:

Er richtete diese Frage **an** mich *He addressed this question to me*

eine Bitte **an** den Bundeskanzler *a request to the Federal Chancellor*

Ich werde mich **an** ihn um Rat wenden *I shall turn to him for advice*

(b) Nouns from verbs which take a dative usually govern *an* (+ acc.)

See **16.4**. The dative object of the verb appears in a prepositional phrase with *an*:

die Anpassung **an** die neuen Verhältnisse *adaptation to new circumstances*

Compare: *Er passt sich* **den neuen Verhältnissen** *an*

sein Befehl **an** die Truppen *his order to the troops*

Compare: *Er befahl* **den Truppen** …

eine Antwort **an** mich ein Bericht **an** die Akademie

viele Grüße **an** Onkel Robert die Kriegserklärung **an** Japan

der Verkauf des Hauses **an** meinen Sohn sein Vermächtnis **an** seine Tochter

For the use of *an* (+ acc.) in this sense with verbs of sending and similar in place of a dative, see **16.4.1d**.

(c) *an* (+ acc.) is used to indicate indefinite quantity

Er verdient **an die** 5000 im Monat *He earns getting on for 5000 a month*

an in this sense is often followed by the definite article. A following adjective has **strong** endings: *an die vierzig* **ausländische** *Gäste.*

(d) Idiomatic uses of *an* (+ acc.)

etwas ans Licht, an den Tag bringen *bring sth. to light*

an (und für) sich *actually*

die Erinnerung an seine Jugend *the memory of his youth*

der Glaube an den Sieg *the belief in victory*

For the use of *an* (+ acc.) in prepositional objects with verbs denoting mental processes, see **16.5.2b**.

18.3.4 *auf* (+ dative)

(a) The basic meaning of *auf* (+ dat.) is 'on (top of)'

For the distinction between *auf* and *an* (+ dat.), see **18.3.2a**.

Das Buch liegt **auf** dem Tisch *The book is lying on the table*

Sie sind **auf** dem Mond gelandet *They landed on the moon*

Die Katze spielt **auf** dem Rasen *The cat is playing on the lawn*

auf dem Weg nach Stuttgart *on the way to Stuttgart*

(b) *auf* (+ dat.) is used for English 'at' or 'in' in some contexts

(i) 'at' formal occasions, e.g. weddings, conferences, parties, etc.:

Ich traf sie **auf** einem Empfang *I met her at a reception*

Wir lernten uns **auf** ihrer Hochzeit kennen *We met at their wedding*

Sie ist **auf** einer Tagung *She's at a conference*

bei is a common alternative to *auf* in this sense, but there may be a slight difference in meaning, see **18.2.3b**.

(ii) with a few other nouns, where idiomatic usage can differ from English:

Die Schafe sind **auf** der Wiese *The sheep are in the meadow*

Er ist **auf** seinem Zimmer *He is (up) in his room*

auf dem Land(e) *in the country*

auf dem (Bauern)hof	*on the farm* in her bedsit	auf dem Gang auf seinem Gut	*in the corridor* on his estate
auf ihrer Bude	in the field	auf dem Hof	in the yard
auf dem Feld	*in the (entrance)*	auf der Toilette	*on the toilet*

auf dem Flur *hall*

Note: *Die Kinder spielen* **auf** *der Straße* ‘The children are playing in the street‘but *in* (+ dat.) is used to refer to a particular street, e.g. *Wir wohnen in der Schillerstraße.*

(iii) with a few nouns denoting public buildings and places. *auf* is nowadays going out of use with some of these and the preposition which is coming to be used more often is given in brackets:

auf dem Bahnhof (an) auf dem Markt(platz) auf dem Rathaus (in)
auf der Bank (in) auf der Post auf der Universität (an)
auf der Bibliothek (in)

(c) Idiomatic uses of *auf* (+ dat.)

blind auf einem Auge *blind in one eye*

Das hat nichts/viel auf sich *There's nothing/a lot to that*

etwas auf dem Herzen haben *have sth. on one's mind*

auf der anderen Seite *on the other hand*

auf der Stelle *immediately*

18.3.5 *auf* (+ accusative)

(a) *auf* (+ acc.) indicates direction if the destination is *auf* (+ dat.)

i.e. it corresponds to English ‘to’ (or ‘onto’) in contexts where the ultimate goal of the person or thing will be a position ‘on (top of)’ or ‘at’ something:

Sie legte das Buch **auf** den Tisch *She put the book on the table*

Die Katze sprang **auf** das Dach *The cat leapt onto the roof*

This means that with nouns with which German uses *auf* (+ dat.) for English 'at' or 'in', *auf* (+ acc.) corresponds to English 'into' or 'to' (see also **18.5.1b**):

Wir gingen **auf** das Feld *We went into the field*

Er ging **auf** sein Zimmer *He went (up) to his room*

Er geht **auf** die Toilette *He's going to the toilet*

(b) *auf* (+ acc.) … *zu* indicates direction (i.e. = 'towards'):

Sie kam **auf** mich **zu** *She came towards me/approached me*

Sie ging **auf** die Tore des Friedhofs **zu** *She went towards the cemetery gates*

(c) *auf* (+ acc.) indicates a period of time extending from 'now'

In this usage it corresponds to English 'for'. It is a less frequent alternative to *für*, see **18.1.3c**, found mainly in formal registers, regionally and in some set phrases:

Sie fährt **auf** vier Monate in die Schweiz	*She is going to Switzerland for three months*
auf unbestimmte Zeit	indefinitely
auf ewig, **auf** immer	*for ever, for good*

(i) *auf* is used idiomatically in *auf die Minute (genau)* '(precisely) to the minute'.

(ii) The prepositional adverb *darauf* is used in the sense of

'after(wards)', see **7.3.1a**, e.g. *am Tag darauf* 'the day after', 'the following day'.

(iii) *auf* (+ acc.) is similarly used to indicate a distance from here, e.g. *Kurven auf fünf Kilometer* 'bends for 5 kilometres'.

(d) *auf* (+ acc.) is used after a large number of adjectives and verbs

(see **6.4.1** and **16.5.3a**), e.g. *Sie ist neidisch* **auf ihn** . *Ich habe vor dem Bahnhof* **auf sie** *gewartet.*

(e) *auf* (+ acc.) can denote 'in response to', 'as a result of'

In this sense it is often strengthened by a following *hin*, see **7.2.3c**:

Auf meine Bitte (**hin**) hat er die Sache für sich behalten	*At my request he kept the matter to himself*
Er hat sofort **auf** meinen Brief **hin** gehandelt	*He acted immediately following my letter*
auf Anfrage	*on application*
auf meine Empfehlung (hin)	*on my recommendation*
auf einen Verdacht hin	*on the strength of a suspicion*
auf Wunsch, auf meinen Wunsch (hin)	*by request, at my request*
daraufhin	*as a result, thereupon*

(f) Other uses of *auf* (+ acc.)

(i) with languages:

Sie hat mir **auf Deutsch** geantwortet *She answered me in German*

in (+ dat.) is also used, especially with extended phrases:

Er hält seine Vorlesungen **in Deutsch/auf Deutsch** *He gives his lectures in German*

Er sagte es **in gebrochenem Deutsch** *He said it in broken German*

Wie heißt das **in Ihrer Sprache** ? *What's that called in your language?*

(ii) to form absolute superlatives, e.g. *aufs angenehmste/Angenehmste*. See **7.7.2a** for further details.

(iii) Idiomatic expressions with *auf* (+ acc.):

jdn. auf den Arm nehmen (S. Ger.)/ auf die Schippe nehmen (N. Ger.) *pull somebody's leg*

etwas auf die lange Bank schieben *put sth. off*

auf den ersten Blick *at first sight*

Das kommt/läuft auf dasselbe hinaus *It comes down to the same thing*

auf jeden Fall, auf alle Fälle *in any case*

auf eigene Gefahr *at one's own risk*

auf eigene Kosten *at one's own expense*

jdm. auf die Nerven gehen, auf den Wecker gehen/fallen *get on somebody's nerves*

Das geht auf meine Rechnung *This one's on me*

auf diese Weise *in this way*

18.3.6 *hinter*

(a) *hinter* is used to refer to place and usually corresponds to English 'behind' or 'beyond'

hinter indicates position with a following noun phrase in the dative case and direction with a noun phrase in the accusative:

Der Wagen steht **hinter** der Garage *The car is behind the garage*

Ich habe das Schlimmste **hinter** mir *I've got the worst behind me*

100 Kilometer **hinter** der Grenze *100 kilometres beyond the border*

Er fuhr den Wagen **hinter** die Garage *He drove the car round the back of the garage*

Sie trieben ihn **hinter** die Kirche *They drove him round the back of the church*

(b) To indicate movement in relation to another person or thing, *hinter* is used with *her*

See also **7.2.3b**. The noun phrase is always in the dative case:

Er rannte **hinter** ihr **her** *He was running after her*

Ich ging **hinter** meinen Eltern **her** *I was walking behind my parents*

(c) Idiomatic expressions with *hinter*

Ich konnte nicht dahinter kommen *I couldn't get to the bottom of it*

Es muss etwas dahinter stecken *There must be something in it*

Schreib dir das hinter die Ohren! *Will you get that into your thick head!*

18.3.7 *in* (+ dative)

(a) The basic meaning of *in* (+ dat.) is 'in(side)'

Sie ist **im** Haus/ **im** Freien/ **in** der Kirche/ **im** Kino/ **in** der Stadt/ **im** Wald/ **im** Tal/ **in** ihrem Zimmer	*She is in the house / in the open air / in the church / in the cinema / in town/ in the forest / in the valley / in her room*
Sie sind **in** Bremen/ **in** Deutschland/ **in** der Schweiz/ **im** Ausland	*They are in Bremen / in Germany / in Switzerland / abroad*
Die Milch ist **im** Kühlschrank	The milk is in the fridge
Die Sonne geht **im** Westen unter	*The sun sets in the west*

In spoken German, *in* can be strengthened by adding *drin*, e.g. *Die sind* **in** *der Hütte* **drin**.

In some contexts, German idiom is different from English:

Ihr Büro ist **im** vierten Stock	*Her office is on the fourth floor*
Das habe ich **im** Fernsehen gesehen/ **im** Radio gehört	*I saw it on television / heard it on the radio*

German uses *in* with reference to attendance at public buildings and the like, where English uses 'at':

Die Kinder sind heute **in** der Schule	*The children are at school today*
Meine Eltern sind **in** der Kirche	My parents are at church
Elke ist **im** Theater/ **in** einem Konzert/ **im** Kino/ **im** Rathaus/ **in** der Bibliothek	*Elke is at the theatre / at a concert / at the cinema / at the town hall / at the library*

(b) *in* (+ dat.) is used in a number of time expressions

(i) ***in*** can refer to a specific period of time or a length of time.

It is used with all words denoting periods of time **except** those with which ***an*** is used (see **20.2.3b**), in particular with the names of the months and seasons (**always** with a definite article, see **4.5a**), and with the following nouns:

der Augenblick die Epoche das Jahr das Jahrhundert die Minute

der Monat die Nacht die Woche das Zeitalter

Examples of use:

im Augenblick, **im** letzten Augenblick	*at the moment, at the last moment*
im Jahre 1812	in 1812
in den letzten paar Jahren	in the last few years
in letzter Minute	at the last moment
im Mittelalter	in the Middle Ages
in der Nacht	at night
zweimal **in** der Woche	twice a week
in der Woche vor Weihnachten	in the week before Christmas
in der Vergangenheit	in the past
in Zukunft	*in future*

For the use of ***in*** or ***zu*** with ***Zeit*** and ***Stunde***, see **18.2.9c**.

The normal equivalent for English 'in 1815' in German is either *im Jahre 1815* or simply *1815*, with no preposition. However, the form *in 1815* is becoming widely used, although many Germans consider it to be quite incorrect.

(ii) ***in*** indicates a period of time within which something happens:

Ich habe die Arbeit **in** zwei Stunden gemacht	*I did the work in two hours*
In zwei Jahren ist der Umsatz um 40 Prozent gestiegen	In two years the turnover rose by 40%
im Lauf(e) der Zeit	in the course of time
	You can do that in two days

Das kann man **in** zwei Tagen schaffen	

(iii) ***in*** can indicate **the time after which something happens or is done**:

Er kommt **in** einer halben Stunde zurück	*He's coming back in half an hour*
heute **in** acht Tagen	a week today, in a week's time
Sie fliegt **in** ein paar Tagen nach Sydney	*She's flying to Sydney in a few days (time)*

In some contexts, *in* can be ambiguous, like English 'in', so that *in drei Tagen* can mean 'in the course of three days' or 'in three days' time'. This ambiguity can be avoided by using *binnen* or *innerhalb*, which mean 'within', e.g. *Der Rhein hat zum zweitenmal binnen 13 Monaten die Kölner Altstadt überschwemmt* (*SZ*).

(c) Idiomatic phrases with *in* (+ dat.)

in der Absicht, etwas zu tun	*with the intention of doing something*
im Allgemeinen	in general
im Durchschnitt	on average
nicht im Geringsten/Entferntesten	not in the slightest
in dieser Hinsicht	in this respect
in gewissem Maße	to a certain extent
in dieser Weise (*also* **auf diese** Weise)	in this way
in diesem Zusammenhang	*in this context*

18.3.8 *in* (+ accusative)

(a) *in* (+ acc.) indicates direction if the destination is *in* (+ dat.)

i.e. in contexts where the ultimate goal of the person or thing will be a position 'in(side)' something. It often corresponds to English 'into':

Sie ging **ins** Haus/ **in** die Kirche/ **in** den Wald/ **in** das Tal/ **in** ihr Zimmer	*She went into the house / the church / the forest / the valley / her room*
Ich habe die Milch **in** den Kühlschrank gestellt	*I put the milk in the fridge*

With *Richtung* the accusative or the dative case can be used: *in diese / dieser Richtung*.

in is a common equivalent of English 'to', if, on arrival, one will be **in** the place concerned, see **18.5.1a**:

Sie ging **in** ein Konzert/ **ins** Kino/ **in** den vierten Stock	*She went to a concert / to the cinema / to the fourth floor*
Wir sind **in** die Schweiz/ **ins** Ausland gefahren	*We went to Switzerland / abroad*
Die Kinder gehen heute **in** die Schule	*The children are going to school today*

(b) Idiomatic phrases with *in* (+ acc.):

Der Vorteil springt ins Auge	*The advantage is obvious*
sich in Bewegung setzen	begin to move
mit jdm. ins Gespräch kommen	get into conversation with sb.
aus dem Französischen ins Deutsche übersetzen	*translate from French into German*

18.3.9 *neben*

(a) *neben* typically corresponds to English 'next to' or

‘beside’

(i) Used with a following dative case, *neben* indicates position:

Die Blumen standen **neben** dem Schrank *The flowers were next to the cupboard*

Er saß **neben** seiner Frau *He was sitting next to his wife*

(ii) With a following accusative, *neben* indicates direction. It can be strengthened by adding *hin*, see **7.2.3a**:

Er stellte die Blumen **neben** den Schrank (hin)	*He put the flowers (down) next to the cupboard*
Er setzte sich **neben** seine Frau (hin)	*He sat down next to his wife*

(b) *neben* with a following *her*

This combination is used when two people or things are moving in the same direction beside one another (see also **7.2.3b**). The noun phrase is always in the **dative** case:

Er ging **neben** seiner Frau **her** *He was walking next to his wife*

(c) *neben* (+ dat.) can be used in the sense of ‘besides’, ‘apart from’

Its sense is close to that of *außer*, see **18.2.2a**:

Neben zwei Franzosen waren alle Anwesenden aus Deutschland	*Apart from two Frenchmen all those present were from Germany*

(d) *neben* (+ dat.) can express a comparison

It is a common alternative to *gegen* or *gegenüber*, see **18.2.4c**:

Neben ihrer Mutter ist sie groß	*She's tall compared with her mother*

(e) The prepositional adverb *daneben*

daneben is used with verbs to express the idea of failing to hit a target. It is usually interpreted as a separable prefix, see **20.6.2**, and written together with the verb:

Er hat danebengeschossen	*He shot wide of the mark*
Sie hat sich danebenbenommen	*She behaved quite abominably*

18.3.10 *über* (+ dative)

With a following noun phrase in the dative case, ***über*** corresponds to English '**over**', '**above**' or, in certain contexts, '**across**' or '**beyond**':

Das Bild hängt **über** meinem Tisch	*The picture hangs over my desk*
Briançon liegt 1400 Meter **über** dem Meeresspiegel	Briançon lies 1400 metres above sea level
Der Baum lag mir (quer) **über** dem Weg	The tree lay across my path
Er wohnt **über** der Grenze	He lives over/across the border
Sie wohnt **über** dem See	*She lives across/beyond the lake*

18.3.11 *über* (+ accusative)

(a) *über* (+ acc.) indicates movement over a person or

object

über corresponds to English 'above', 'over', 'across' or (with reference to a journey) 'via':

Sie hängte das Bild **über** meinen Tisch	*She hung the picture over/above my desk*
Wir gingen **über** die Straße	We crossed the road
die neue Brücke **über** den Inn	the new bridge over/across the Inn
Der Baum fiel uns (quer) **über** den Weg	The tree fell across our path
Er ist **über** die Grenze geflüchtet	He fled over the border
Wir sind **über** die Schweiz nach Italien gefahren	We drove to Italy through Switzerland
Dieser Zug fährt nach Stralsund **über** Rostock	This train goes to Stralsund via Rostock
Der Kaiser herrschte **über** viele Länder	*The emperor ruled over many countries*

If the movement involved is parallel to a surface, ***über*** (+ acc.) can be strengthened by adding ***hin***, see **7.2.3a**:

Die Enten flogen **über** den See (**hin**)	*The ducks were flying over the lake*

(b) *über* (+ acc.) is used in more abstract senses of 'above' or 'beyond'

In the sense of going 'beyond', a limitation *über* can be strengthened by adding ***hinaus***:

Diese Aufgabe geht **über** meine Fähigkeiten (**hinaus**)	*This task goes beyond my capabilities*
Er liebt die Ruhe **über** alles darüber hinaus	He likes quiet above all things *over and above that*

(c) *über* (+ acc.) occurs in a few time expressions in the sense of 'over'

Sie ist **über** Nacht/ **übers** Wochenende geblieben	*She stayed overnight/over the weekend*
über kurz oder lang	*sooner or later*

It can be used **after** a noun in the accusative (see **2.2.2**) to emphasize duration:

Sie blieb die ganze Nacht **über**	*She stayed the whole night*
die Schwäne, die den Winter **über** geblieben waren (*Surminski*)	*The swans which had stayed the whole winter*

(d) *über* (+ acc.) has the sense of 'over', 'more than' with quantities

e.g. *Es hat über tausend Euro gekostet*; *Kinder über zehn Jahre*, etc. See **8.1.6** for further details of this usage and the distinction between the adverbial and prepositional usage of *über* with quantities.

(e) *über* (+ acc.) is used in the sense of 'about', 'concerning'

ein Buch **über** die europäischen Vögelarten	*a book about European bird species*
meine Freude **über** ihren Erfolg	my delight at her success
Er beschwerte sich **über** den kaputten Fernsehapparat	He complained about the broken television set
Sie war ärgerlich **über** ihn	*She was annoyed at him*

This usage is particularly frequent with nouns, adjectives (see **6.4.1b**) and in the prepositional object of verbs of saying, etc. (see **16.5.9a**).

18.3.12 *unter* (+ dative)

(a) *unter* (+ dat.) corresponds to English 'under(neath)', 'beneath', 'below'

Manfred lag **unter** dem Tisch — *Manfred was lying under(neath) the table*

180 Meter **unter** dem Gipfel — *180 metres below the summit*

Das Land steht **unter** Wasser — *The land is under water*

Sie trug die Tasche **unter** dem Arm — *She was carrying her bag under her arm*

(b) *unter* (+ dat.) is a common equivalent for English 'among(st)'

Hier bist du **unter** Freunden	*You're among friends here*
Ich fand das Rezept **unter** meinen Papieren	I found the prescription among my papers
Unter den Zuschauern waren viele Ausländer	There were a lot of foreigners among the spectators
unter uns gesagt	between ourselves
unter vier Augen	in private
unter anderem (u.a.)	*amongst other things*

zwischen can also correspond to English 'among(st)', see **16.3.17a**. It is preferred if *unter* could be understood to mean 'under'. Compare:

Das Haus steht **unter Bäumen** — *The house stands under some trees*

Das Haus steht **zwischen Bäumen** — *The house stands amongst some trees*

(c) *unter* (+ dat.) indicates circumstances

unter diesen Umständen *under these circumstances*

unter allen Umständen *in any case*

unter den größten Schwierigkeiten *with the greatest difficulty*

unter diesen Bedingungen *on these conditions*

unter Vorspiegelung falscher Tatsachen *on false pretences*

(d) *unter* (+ dat.) has the sense of 'under', 'below' with reference to quantity

e.g. *Es hat unter tausend Euro gekostet.* See **8.1.6** for further details of this usage and the distinction between the adverbial and prepositional usage of *unter* with quantities.

18.3.13 *unter* (+ accusative)

(a) *unter* (+ acc.) indicates direction if the destination is unter (+ dat.)

i.e. where English has 'under(neath)', 'below', 'among':

Manfred kroch **unter** den Tisch *Manfred crawled under the table*

Sie steckte die Tasche **unter** ihren Arm *She put her bag under her arm*

Er tauchte den Kopf **unter** das Wasser *He dipped his head under the water*

Wir gingen **unter** die Brücke hindurch *We walked under the bridge*

Sie ging **unter** die Menge *She went among the crowd*

(b) Idiomatic expressions with *unter* (+ acc.)

jdn. unter die Arme greifen	*come to sb.'s assistance*
sein Licht unter den Scheffel stellen	*hide one's light under a bushel*
etwas unter den Tisch fallen lassen	*let sth. go by the board*

18.3.14 *vor* (+ dative)

(a) With reference to place, *vor* (+ dat.) means 'in front of', 'ahead of'

Das Auto steht **vor** der Garage	*The car is in front of the garage*
Der Himalaja lag **vor** uns	The Himalayas lay before us
vor ihm in einiger Entfernung	some distance ahead of him
Die Insel Rügen liegt **vor** der deutschen Ostseeküste	*The island of Rügen lies off the Baltic coast of Germany*

(b) *vor* (+ dat.) with a following *her*

This combination is used when a person or thing is moving ahead of another in the same direction (see also **7.2.3b**):

Vor uns **her** fuhr ein roter BMW	*A red BMW was driving along ahead of us*

(c) *vor* is used in time expressions with the sense of 'ago' or 'before'

vor einem Jahr, **vor** mehreren Jahren	*a year ago, several years ago* a long time ago, some time ago
vor langer Zeit, **vor** einiger Zeit	*not long ago, recently* (see **7.3.5**)
vor kurzem	*a week ago yesterday*
gestern **vor** acht Tagen	*the conditions before the crisis*

die Verhältnisse **vor** der Krise

In many contexts *her* can be used in the sense of English 'ago', e.g. *Es ist schon lange, einen Monat* **her** 'It's a long time, a month ago'. *Wie lange ist es (schon)* **her** *?* 'How long ago is it?', see **7.2.5**.

(d) *vor* can indicate cause or reason

In this sense, *vor* (+ dat.) normally occurs without a following article:

Man konnte **vor** Lärm nichts hören	*You couldn't hear anything for the noise*
Ich konnte **vor** Aufregung nicht einschlafen	I couldn't get to sleep with the excitement
Vor Nebel war nichts zu sehen	You couldn't see anything for the fog
blass **vor** Furcht, gelb **vor** Neid	*pale with fear, green with envy*

In contrast to *aus*, see **18.2.1c**, which points to a voluntary cause or reason, *vor* (+ dat.) always expresses a cause which is involuntary. This use of *vor* (+ dat.) is very common with adjectives, see **6.4.1**, and in the prepositional object of verbs, see **16.5.12**.

18.3.15 *vor* (+ accusative)

(a) *vor* (+ acc.) indicates movement to the front of something or someone

Ich fuhr den Wagen **vor** die Garage	*I drove up in front of the garage*
Sie stellte sich **vor** mich	*She stepped in front of me*
Alle traten **vor** den Vorhang	*Everyone stepped out in front of the curtain*

(b) *vor* sich hin means 'to oneself'

See also **7.2.5**, e.g.:

Sie las **vor** sich **hin**	*She was reading to herself*
Ich murmelte etwas **vor** mich **hin**	*I muttered something to myself*

18.3.16 *zwischen*

(a) *zwischen* is used with reference to place or time in the sense of English 'between'

(i) ***zwischen* (+ dat.)** indicates **position**:

Ich saß **zwischen** dem Minister und seiner Frau	*I was sitting between the minister and his wife*
Die Tagung fand **zwischen** dem 4. und dem 11. Oktober statt	The conference took place between the 4th and the 11th of October
zwischen den Zeilen lesen	*read between the lines*

zwischen can also correspond to English 'among(st)' if more than two objects are involved:

Pilze wuchsen **zwischen** den Bäumen	*Toadstools were growing among(st) the trees*

See **16.3.13b** for the distinction between *unter* and *zwischen* to mean 'among'.

(ii) ***zwischen* (+ acc.)** indicates **direction**:

Ich setzte mich **zwischen** den Minister und seine Frau	*I sat down between the minister and his wife*

Wir legen die Tagung **zwischen** den 4. und den 11. Oktober	*We are putting the conference between the 4th and the 11th of October*

(b) *zwischen* (+ dat.) with a following *her*

This combination is used when a person or thing is moving between others in the same direction (see also **7.2.3b**). The noun phrase is **always in the dative** case:

Ich ging **zwischen** meinen Eltern **her**	*I was walking between my parents*

(c) *zwischen* (+ dat.) has the sense of 'between' with reference to quantity

e.g. *Kinder zwischen dem 10. und dem 15. Lebensjahr*. See **8.1.6** for further details of this usage and the distinction between the adverbial and prepositional usage of *zwischen* with expressions of quantity.

18.4 Prepositions governing the genitive case

The **prepositions governing the genitive fall into four groups**:

• **four common prepositions**, dealt with in 18.4.1

(an)statt	**trotz**	**während**	**wegen**

These are used with the genitive in formal registers, but the dative is often used in colloquial speech.

• the preposition **entlang**, dealt with in **18.4.2**

Usage with *entlang* is extremely variable, with the accusative and

dative also being used.

• **eight prepositions** expressing **place relationships**, dealt with in 18.4.3

außerhalb	**oberhalb**	**diesseits**	**unweit**
innerhalb	**unterhalb**	**jenseits**	

These are often used with a following *von* rather than a genitive.

• a **large number of prepositions with specialized meanings** which are used mainly in formal (especially official) registers. They are listed and explained in **18.4.4**.

18.4.1 The four common prepositions which govern the genitive

(a) *(an)statt* 'instead of'

The longer form *anstatt* is less frequent and it occurs chiefly in formal written German.

Statt eines Fernsehers hat sie sich ein teures Tablet gekauft	*Instead of a television she bought herself an expensive tablet*
Statt eines Briefes schickte er ihr eine Postkarte	*Instead of a letter he sent her a postcard*

(an)statt can be used **as a conjunction rather than a preposition**, i.e. as an alternative to *und nicht*. In this construction the noun or pronoun has the same case as the noun or pronoun immediately preceding *(an)statt* with which it is linked:

In Aachen habe ich meinen Onkel Otto **statt** (= und nicht) meine	*In Aachen I visited my uncle Otto instead of my aunt Käthe*

Tante Käthe besucht Ihr Haus hat sie mir **statt** (= und nicht) ihm vermacht	*She left her house to me instead of to him*

(an)statt is always used like this if it links prepositional phrases or personal pronouns:

Ich schreibe jetzt wieder mit einem altmodischen Füller **statt** mit einem Filzstift	*I write with an old-fashioned fountain pen again now instead of with a felt-tip*

anstelle von is a common alternative to *(an)statt*. It can sound less stilted:

Wir essen jetzt Margarine **anstelle von** Butter	*We eat margarine instead of butter now*

For infinitive phrases with *(an)statt … zu* and the conjunction *(an)statt dass* see **11.2.6c**.

(b) *trotz* ‘despite’, ‘in spite of’

Wir sind am Sonntag **trotz** des starken Regens nach Eulbach gewandert	*We walked to Eulbach on Sunday despite the heavy rain*

(c) *während* ‘during’

während usually corresponds to English ‘during’:

Sie hat **während** der Aufführung geschlafen	*She slept during the performance*
während der Wintermonate (*Bumke*)	during the winter months *during the last holiday which they had spent in Italy*

während des letzten Urlaubs, den sie in Italien verbracht hatten (*Walser*)

Unlike English 'during', *während* is not often used with simple time words like *Tag*, *Abend*, *Nacht* or *Jahr* if these just have a definite article with them. Compare:

am Tag, **am** Abend, **in** der Nacht	*during the day, during the evening, during the night*

However, *während* can be used with these nouns if there is an adjective with them, or if they are used with a determiner other than the definite article:

Während der letzten Nacht ist der Junge zweimal aufgewacht	*During the previous night the boy woke up twice*
während eines einzigen Tages	*during/in the course of a single day*

während indicates a period rather than simply duration, and it can be used in this sense in contexts where 'during' would be unusual in English:

während der ganzen Nacht	*throughout the night*
Andere Vogelarten wie der Star können **während** mindestens zweier Jahre Neues dazulernen (*NZZ*)	Other species of birds like starlings can learn new things over the course of at least two years
Während dreier Jahre verbrachten sie den Urlaub auf Sylt	*Three years running they spent their holidays on Sylt*

(d) *wegen* 'because of', 'for the sake of'

(i) *wegen* normally precedes the noun it governs, but it sometimes follows in elevated registers:

Wir konnten **wegen** des Regens nicht kommen	*We couldn't come because of the rain*
Er musste **wegen** zu schnellen Fahrens eine Geldstrafe bezahlen	He had to pay a fine because he had been driving too fast
Er wich jeder Schafherde aus, nicht der Schafe **wegen**, sondern um den Geruch der Hirten zu umgehen (*Süßkind*)	*He kept away from all the flocks of sheep, not because of the sheep, but to avoid the smell of the shepherds*

(ii) *wegen* is sometimes used to mean 'about', 'concerning':

Wegen deiner Reise muss ich noch mit Gesine sprechen	*I've still got to talk to Gesine about your trip*

(iii) The combination ***von*** (+ gen.) … ***wegen*** occurs in a few set phrases:

von Amts wegen	*ex officio*
von Berufs wegen	*by virtue of one's profession*
von Rechts wegen	*legally, by rights*

(iv) The combination ***von wegen*** is common in informal registers to mean 'because of' or 'concerning'. This usage is not generally considered standard:

Zunächst haben die Medien ordentlich kritisiert, **von wegen** schlechtes Management (*H. Pundt*)	*First of all there was some heavy criticism in the media, because of the bad management*

von wegen is very frequent in isolation in spoken German to challenge a previous statement:

Also, heute Abend bezahlst du alles. – **Von wegen!**	*So, you're paying for everything tonight. – No way!*

For the forms of personal pronouns and demonstratives with *wegen*

(*meinetwegen*, *ihretwegen*, etc.), see **3.1.2c** and **5.1.1b**.

(e) The use of *(an)statt, trotz, während* and *wegen* with a dative

(i) These prepositions are regularly followed by a noun phrase in the genitive in standard German, and the use of the dative with them is generally considered unacceptable.

(ii) However, reflecting the general tendency to avoid the genitive in informal registers (see **2.3**), they are frequently used with a following dative in **everyday speech**, e.g.:

Ich konnte **wegen dem Regen** nicht kommen

Während dem Mittagessen hat sie uns etwas über ihren Urlaub erzählt

(iii) The use of the dative is also tolerated in writing **in Switzerland**, e.g.:

Die Koalition wird deshalb vorerst wahrscheinlich trotz **dem neuerlichen Scheitern** überleben (*NZZ*)

An example like this would be almost unthinkable in a serious newspaper in Germany.

(iv) Nevertheless, there are some **contexts in which the use of the dative case is generally accepted** with these prepositions, even in formal written registers:

• if they are followed by a plural noun which is not accompanied by a declined determiner or adjective: *während fünf* **Jahren** *, wegen ein paar* **Hindernissen**

• if the noun they govern is preceded by a possessive genitive: *während Vaters* **kurzem Urlaub** *, wegen des ehemaligen Bundeskanzlers* **langem Schweigen**

• to avoid the use of the genitive of the personal pronouns, see **3.1.2**: *Langsam fahren* – **wegen uns** *!* (on a road sign outside a kindergarten)

• to avoid consecutive genitives in *-(e)s*, see **2.4.2a**: ***trotz dem Rollen*** *des Zuges* (*Th. Mann*)

• optionally, if the following noun has no determiner with it: ***trotz*** *Geldmangel(s)*, **wegen** *Amtsmissbrauch(s)*

• to achieve a particular stylistic effect: *Freies Denken* **statt starrem Lenken** (election slogan)

• a relative pronoun after one of these prepositions can be in the dative: *seit dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs, während* **dem** *die Stadt Salzburg zahlreiche Bombenangriffe erleiden musste* (*Baedeker*)

18.4.2 *entlang*

entlang **corresponds to English 'along'**. There is **considerable variation in usage** with it, both in respect of the **case** it governs and its **position before** or **after the noun**, and this has changed considerably in recent years.

(a) Case use with *entlang*

(i) In writing, *entlang* is most frequently used with a **following** noun phrase in the **genitive** case, especially to indicate position alongside an extended object:

die Uferpromenade **entlang des** Rheins *the promenade along the bank of the Rhine*

(*MM*)

die Minenfelder **entlang der** Grenzen *the minefields along the frontiers to Turkey*

zur Türkei und zum Iran (*SZ*) *and Iran*

Bäume standen **entlang der** Bahnlinie *Trees stood along the railway line*

(ii) A following noun phrase in the dative is rather less frequent, but not uncommon:

im Sommer, wenn **entlang den** *in summer when roses are blooming*

Boulevards und in den Vorgärten *along the boulevards and in the*

Rosen blühen (*Zeit*) *front gardens*

(iii) Very occasionally, *entlang* **follows a noun phrase** in the **dative**:

die Straße, die Mussolini **der Küste** *the road which Mussolini built along*

entlang gebaut hat (*Grzimek*) *the coast*

Wir flogen gar nicht **der Küste entlang** (*Frisch*) *We were not flying along the coast at all*

This usage was frequent until fairly recently, but it is no longer common except in Switzerland.

(iv) *entlang* very often **follows a noun phrase** in the **accusative**:

Gehst du die Reihen der Maschinen **entlang** (*ND*)	*If you walk along the rows of machines*
Sie gingen den Bach **entlang**	They were walking along the stream
Sie hastete den Flur **entlang** bis zum Ende des Ganges (*Johnson*)	She hurried along the entrance hall to the end of the corridor
Flaschen und Gläser standen **die lange Tafel entlang** (*Welt*)	*Bottles and glasses were standing along the long table*

This is common in both spoken and written German, especially (but not only) to indicate movement along an extended object. In colloquial speech in North Germany *entlang* is often shortened to *lang*.

(b) *an* (+ dat.) … *entlang* is a common alternative to simple entlang

It can be used with reference to position or movement:

Da gab es **an** der nördlichen Friedhofsmauer **entlang** den Bittweg (*Grass*)	*Along the north wall of the cemetery was the Bittweg*
Er steuerte **am** Ufer **entlang**, bis die Stelle gefunden war (*Frisch*)	*He steered along the bank until he had found the spot*

(c) Alternatives to *entlang* in the meaning 'along'

entlang is used less frequently than English *along*, and the following are common equivalents:

(i) ***an*** (+ dat.), see **18.3.2a**, often appears in contexts where English naturally uses 'along', e.g.:

An der Küste war das Wetter schön	*The weather was fine along the coast*

(ii) ***an*** (+ dat.) … **hin** can refer to movement alongside something, especially when one is very close to it or in contact with it:

Sie ging **an der Mauer hin**	*She went along the wall*
Er rutschte **am Boden hin**	*He slid along the floor*

(iii) *längs*, see **18.4.4**, only expresses position. It governs a following genitive or (less commonly) a dative, e.g. *längs der Küste*, *längs des Flusses/dem Fluss.*

18.4.3 The eight prepositions denoting position

(a) Meaning and use

(i) ***außerhalb*** 'outside' and ***innerhalb*** 'inside', 'within' can refer to **place or time**:

Sie wohnt **außerhalb** der Stadt	*She lives outside the city*
Das liegt **außerhalb** / **innerhalb** meines Fachgebietes	That lies outside/within my specialist field
Das kann sie **außerhalb** der Arbeitszeit erledigen	She can finish that outside working hours
Das wird **innerhalb** eines Jahres geändert werden	*That will be changed within a year*

außerhalb and *innerhalb* only denote position, not direction. Compare:

Wir gingen aus der Hütte hinaus/ in die Hütte hinein	*We went outside/inside the hut*

Like *binnen* (see **18.2.10b**), *innerhalb* can be used to avoid potential ambiguity with *in*, see **18.3.7b**.

(ii) ***oberhalb*** 'above' and ***unterhalb*** 'below', 'underneath' refer to position and are more specific than *über* and *unter*:

Oberhalb der Straße war ein Felsenvorsprung	*Above the road there was a rocky ledge*
Ich habe mich **unterhalb** des Knies verletzt	I injured myself below the knee
der Rhein **oberhalb** / **unterhalb** der Stadt Basel	*the Rhine above/below the city of Basle*

(iii) ***beid(er)seits*** 'on either side of', **diesseits** 'on this side of', **jenseits** 'beyond', 'on the other side of':

in den Bauten **beidseits** des Flusses *in the buildings on either side of the*

(*FR*)	*river*
diesseits, **jenseits** der niederländischen Grenze	*on this side, the other side of the Dutch border*

hinter is more commonly used for 'beyond' than *jenseits*, especially in informal registers, e.g. *Das Dorf liegt hinter der Grenze, hinter Hannover.*

(iv) ***unweit*** 'not far from'

Wir standen auf einer Höhe **unweit** des Dorfes	*We were standing on a hill not far from the village*

unfern, used with the genitive or the dative in the same meaning as *unweit*, is almost obsolete.

(b) All these prepositions are often used with *von* rather than the genitive

This is usual in spoken German, but it is also quite common in writing, although the genitive tends to be preferred in formal registers:

Sie wohnt **außerhalb von** der Stadt

Innerhalb von einem Jahr wird alles anders werden

Jenseits von der Grenze standen vier Vopos

ein Dorf **unweit von** Moskau (*Bednarz*)

Nevertheless, using *von* is the norm even in written German in those contexts where the common prepositions taking the genitive are used with the dative (see **18.4.1e**), e.g. *innerhalb* **von** *fünf Jahren.*

A relative pronoun following these prepositions is very often in the dative rather than the genitive, e.g. *die Zone, innerhalb* **der** (less commonly: *derer*) *Autos verboten sind.*

18.4.4 Other prepositions governing the genitive

(a) Prepositions with the genitive in formal registers

The large number of other prepositions with the genitive are largely limited to formal, especially written registers, the majority in official and commercial language. Elsewhere they can sound stilted. However, the genitive case is very much associated with formal registers and seen as appropriate there, to such an extent that a number of prepositions, like *entlang*, *gegenüber* and *laut* have recently come to be used more often with the genitive, even where standard authorities consider this to be incorrect (as is particularly the case with *gegenüber*).

Many of the prepositions governing the genitive were originally adverbs, participles or phrases which have only recently come to be used as prepositions, and similar new ones are constantly entering the language. With this proviso, the following list is as complete as possible.

abseits *away from*: eine Speisekarte abseits jeglicher Tradition (*Presse*)

† **abzüglich** *deducting, less*: abzüglich der Unkosten

anfangs *at the beginning of*: anfangs dieses Jahres (or with the acc.: *anfangs nächsten Monat*)

angesichts *in view of*: angesichts der wachsenden Konkurrenz aus Fernost (*MM*)

anhand (*also* **an Hand**): *with the aid of / from*: anhand einiger Beispiele

anlässlich *on the occasion of*: anlässlich seines siebzigsten Geburtstages

anstelle (*also* **an Stelle**): *in place of, instead of*: anstelle einer Antwort (in speech: *anstelle* **von**)

aufgrund (*also* **auf Grund**): *on the strength of*: aufgrund seiner Ausbildung (in speech: *aufgrund* **von**)

† **ausschließlich** *exclusive of*: die Miete ausschließlich der Heizungskosten

ausweislich *according to*: Im Lesen sind die Deutschen ausweislich dieser Studie keineswegs Spitze (*SZ*)

behufs *for the purpose of*: behufs einer Verhandlung

betreffs, bezüglich *with regard to*: betreffs, bezüglich Ihres Angebotes

eingangs *at the beginning of*: eingangs dieses Jahres

eingedenk (*may precede or follow the noun*) *bearing in mind*: eingedenk seiner beruflichen Fehlschläge

† **einschließlich** *including*: einschließlich der Angehörigen (*SZ*)

† **exklusive** *excluding*: exklusive Versandkosten

fernab *far from*: fernab des Lärms der Städte

hinsichtlich *with regard to*: hinsichtlich Ihrer Anfrage

infolge *as a result of*: infolge der neuen Steuergesetze (often with *von: infolge von den Steuergesetzen*)

† **inklusive** *including*: inklusive Bedienung

inmitten *in the middle of*: ein neues Möbelhaus inmitten der Fußgängerzone (*HAZ*)

kraft *in virtue of*: kraft seines Amtes

längs *along(side)*: längs des Flusses (*less frequently*: längs dem Fluss)

links *on/to the left of*: links der Donau

† **mangels** *for want of*: Freispruch mangels Beweises

† **mittels** *by means of*: mittels eines gefälschten Passes

namens *in the name of*: Ich möchte Sie namens unseres Betriebes einladen

ob *on account of:* die Besorgnisse des sowjetischen Staatspräsidenten ob der deutschen Frage (*Zeit*)

plus *plus* (*commercial registers*): 5 Prozent plus einer Topdividende von 0,75 Prozent (*HAZ*)

rechts *to/on the right of*: rechts der Isar

seitens *on the part of*: seitens der Bezirksverwaltung

seitlich *to/at the side of*: seitlich der Hauptstraße

unbeschadet (*after or before the noun*) *regardless of*: unbeschadet des enttäuschenden Ergebnisses (*Presse*)

ungeachtet (*after or before the noun*) *notwithstanding*: ungeachtet unserer üblichen Skepsis (*Dönhoff*)

vermöge *by dint of*: vermöge seines unermüdlichen Fleißes

vorbehaltlich *subject to*: vorbehaltlich seiner Zustimmung

zeit (*only in set phrases with* das Leben) *during*: zeit seines Lebens

zugunsten (*also* **zu Gunsten**) *for the benefit of*: eine Sammlung zugunsten der Opfer des Faschismus

zuungunsten (*also* **zu Ungunsten**) *to the disadvantage of*: Die Richter urteilen meist zuungunsten der Skisportler (*MM*)

† **zuzüglich** *plus*: Es kostet 1800 Euro zuzüglich der Versandkosten

† **zwecks** *for the purpose of*: Er besuchte sie zwecks einer gründlichen Erörterung der Situation

† These prepositions are used with a following dative case in the same contexts as the common prepositions, see **18.4.1e**.

(b) Special cases: halber and um … willen

These two prepositions, which are typical of elevated, especially literary registers, have special forms.

(i) **halber** 'for the sake of' follows the noun, e.g. *der Wahrheit halber*.

It can be **compounded with nouns** to form adverbs, e.g. *sicherheitshalber* 'for safety's sake', *urlaubshalber* 'for a holiday', *vorsichtshalber* 'as a precaution'.

When used **with pronouns** *halber* appears as *-halben* and is compounded with forms of the pronoun in *- t*, e.g. *meinethalben* 'for my sake', 'for all me', see **3.1.2c** and **5.1.1b**.

(ii) **um … willen** *for the sake of* has a noun between its two parts, e.g. *um meiner Mutter willen*.

It is compounded with special forms of the personal pronouns in ***- t***, e.g. *um meinetwillen*, see **3.1.2c** and **5.1.1b**.

18.5 German equivalents for English 'to'

English 'to' has a number of possible German equivalents depending on context, and the use of each of these is summarized here for convenience. Fuller details and further examples can be found in earlier sections under the relevant German prepositions.

18.5.1 *an, auf or in* (+ accusative)

The choice between ***an***, ***auf*** or ***in*** with a noun phrase in the accusative case to mean 'to' depends on which of these prepositions would be **used with the dative to express position** 'in' or 'at' the place concerned after you get there. Thus:

(a) *in* (+ accusative) is used for going 'to' places where you will then be inside

i.e. (*in* + dative):

Sie geht **ins** Büro/ **ins** Dorf/ **ins** Kino/ **in** die Kirche/ **in** ein Museum/

ins Restaurant/ **in** die Schule/ **in** die Stadt/ **in** den Zoo, etc.

In this way, *Ich gehe* **in** *die Kirche* means 'I am going to church' in the sense of going in to a service. If you are just going up to the church, you would say: *Ich gehe* **an** *die Kirche* or *Ich gehe* **zur** *Kirche*.

(b) *auf* (+ accusative) is used for going 'to' certain places and events

in particular those where *auf* (+ dative) is used to say you are 'at' them.

(i) The use of *auf* is idiomatic with many nouns:

Die Schafe gingen **auf** die Wiese *The sheep went into the meadow*

Wir fahren **aufs** Land *We're going to the country*

Die Kinder gingen **auf** die Straße *The children went into the street*

Similarly:

auf den Berg	*up the mountain*	auf sein Gut	*to his estate*
auf den	to the farm	auf den Hof	into the yard
(Bauern)hof	to her bedsit	auf die Jagd	go hunting
auf ihre Bude	into the hall	gehen	*to the toilet*
auf den Flur	*into the corridor*	auf die Toilette	
auf den Gang			

With all these, *auf* (+ dative) is used to indicate presence 'in' or 'on' them, see **18.3.4b**.

(ii) *auf* (+ accusative) can also be used for going 'to' formal occasions (e.g. weddings, conferences, parties, etc.):

Sie ging **auf** einen Empfang, **auf** eine Hochzeit, **auf** eine Party, **auf** eine Tagung

Although *auf* (+ dative) can be used to denote presence 'at' such functions, see **18.3.4b**, *zu* is now as frequent as *auf* (+ accusative) to express going 'to' them, especially in less formal registers.

(iii) *auf* (+ accusative) is used for going 'to' certain public buildings:

Sie ging **auf** den Bahnhof, **auf** die Bank, **auf** die Bibliothek, **auf** die Post,

auf das Rathaus, **auf** die Universität

With many of these words, *auf* occurs chiefly in more formal registers or in Austrian usage (see **18.3.4b** and **18.3.5a**). *zu* is regularly used in its place, although *an* (+ accusative) is frequent with *Universität*.

(c) *an* expresses direction 'to' a precise spot or objects which extend lengthways

(i.e. rivers, shores, etc.). *an* expresses movement to a point adjacent to the object concerned. You are then *an* (+ dative) that point, i.e. 'at' it, see **18.3.2a**. Examples:

Er ging **an den** Tisch	→	Er steht **an dem** Tisch
Sie kam **an die** Bushaltestelle	→	Sie traf ihn **an der** Bushaltestelle
Sie ging **an die** Grenze	→	**An der** Grenze wurde kontrolliert
Wir fahren **ans** Meer	→	Wir verbringen unseren Urlaub **am** Meer

Similarly:

Er eilte **ans** Fenster Er ging **an** die Kasse

Wir kamen **an** die Front Sie ging **ans** Ufer

Sie geht **ans** Mikrophon/ **an** ihren Platz/ **an** die Straßenkreuzung/ **an** die Tür/ **an** die Tafel/

an die Stelle wo der Tote aufgefunden wurde

Sie gehen **an** den Fluss/ **an** die Mosel/ **an** den Strand/ **an** den See/ **an** die Theke/ **an** den Zaun

18.5.2 *zu*

(a) *zu* is often used in place of the more precise prepositions *an, auf* and *in*

(see **18.5.1**). It is rather vaguer than these three prepositions and tends to emphasize general direction rather than reaching the objective. It is particularly frequent in colloquial registers.

(i) *zu* is used rather than *in* if one is just going up to the place involved (but not necessarily going inside), or to emphasize the general direction rather than reaching the place:

Ich ging **zum** neuen Kino und wartete auf ihn

Die Straßenbahn fährt **zum** Zoo

(ii) *zu* is in practice more common than *auf* in current (especially informal) usage with reference to functions and public buildings:

Er geht **zu** einem Empfang/ **zu** einer Tagung/ **zu** einer Party

Wir gehen **zum** Bahnhof/ **zur** Bank/ **zur** Post/ **zum** Rathaus/ **zur** Universität

(iii) *zu* is used rather than *an* if the emphasis is on general direction

rather than arriving adjacent to the place concerned:

Ich begleite sie **zur** Fabrik Er geht **zum** Fenster, **zur** Tür

Sie geht **zu** ihrem Platz Er schlendert **zur** Theke

(b) *zu* is always used with reference to people

i.e. going up to someone, or to their house or shop

Sie geht **zu** ihrem Onkel/ **zu** ihrer Freundin

Er geht **zu** Fleischers/ **zu** seinem Chef

Wir gehen **zum** Bäcker frische Semmeln kaufen

18.5.3 Equivalents for English 'to' with geographical names

(a) *nach* is used with neuter names of continents, countries and towns

i.e. those which are used without an article (see **18.2.6a**):

Wir fahren **nach** Amerika, **nach** Frankreich, **nach** Duisburg

(b) *in* (+ accusative) is used with names of countries, etc. which are used with an article

Most of these are feminine, but a few are masculine, neuter or plural, see **4.4.1**:

Sie reist morgen **in** die Schweiz, **in** den Jemen (or nach Jemen), **in** das Elsass, **in** die USA

(c) Various prepositions are used with other geographical names

In particular *in*, *an* or *auf* (+ acc.) are used in the same way as with other nouns, see **18.5.1**, depending on whether one will be *in*, *an* or *auf* (+ dat.) on arrival:

Wir fahren **in** die Alpen, **in** den Harz

Wir gingen **auf** den Feldberg, **auf** die Jungfrau

Wir wollen im Sommer **an** den Bodensee, **an** die Riviera fahren

Word order

German word order is different to English and it has a different role in determining how sentences are constructed.

English uses word order to identify the SUBJECT and the OBJECT (S) of the verb. In English, the subject must come first, before the verb, and the objects after it, in the order indirect object + direct object. In a sentence like

My father has lent our neighbour the old lawnmower

We cannot move the elements round without saying something different, so that, for example, *Our neighbour lent my father the old lawnmower* has another meaning. In German, various permutations are possible without changing the essential meaning:

- **Mein Vater** hat ***unserem Nachbarn*** *den alten Rasenmäher* geliehen
- **Unserem Nachbarn** hat **mein Vater** *den alten Rasenmäher* geliehen
- *Den alten Rasenmäher* hat **mein Vater** ***unserem Nachbarn*** geliehen
- **Mein Vater** hat *den alten Rasenmäher* **unserem Nachbarn** geliehen

In German the **case endings**, not the word order, tell us **who is doing what to whom**, i.e. what is the subject and what are the objects. **The order of the words and phrases can be changed round to give a different emphasis to the elements without altering the basic meaning**. The last variant, for example, stresses who is being lent the lawnmower. In German, the position of the verb is fixed, and the other

elements can be moved in order to show different emphases.

Nevertheless, the various elements do tend to come in a particular order – but this is a tendency rather than a rule of grammar. This chapter shows first this 'neutral' basic order, and then how it can be varied to give a different emphasis:

- the **three basic clause structures**, with the finite verb in different positions (section **19.1**)

- the use of **first position** in main clauses to highlight an important element (section **19.2**)

- the position of the **other elements** in the clause (sections **19.3–19.8**)

- the position of **noun** and **pronoun subject** and **objects** (section **19.4**)

- the position of **adverbials** (section **19.5**)

- the position of ***nicht*** and other negative elements (section **19.6**)

- the position of other verb **complements** (section **19.7**)

- placing elements **after the verb** at the end of the clause (section **19.8**)

Although we usually speak of '**word**' order, what is involved is often a **phrase** of some kind rather than a single word. For example, time adverbials tend to come in a particular place whether they are single words, like *heute*, or phrases like *den ganzen Tag* or *am kommenden Dienstag*. In order to cover these possibilities, we refer to these segments of the clause as **elements**. In German they are called *Satzglieder*.

19.1 Clause structure and the position of the verb

A basic feature of German word order is that the various parts of the verb have a fixed position in the clause.

19.1.1 The three basic clause structures of German

There are **three clause types** in German and these differ in the **place of the** FINITE VERB:

• **main clause statements**: *Petra* **kommt** *nach Erfurt*

The finite verb is the **second** element

• **questions and commands**: ***Kommt*** *Petra nach Erfurt?* **Kommen** Sie nach Erfurt!

The finite verb is the **first** element

• **subordinate clauses**: *Ich weiß, dass Petra nach Erfurt* **kommt**

The finite verb is the **last** element

(a) Main clause statements

In main clauses the finite verb is the second element. This means that **only one element**, whether it is a single word, a phrase, or a whole clause, comes before the finite verb. All other parts of the verb, i.e. infinitives, past participles or separable prefixes, are placed at the end of the clause, as shown in **Table 19.1**:

Table 19.1 The position of the verb in main clauses

Initial position	Verb[1]	Other elements	Verb[2]
Monika	**kommt**	eben aus der	fahren
Morgen	muss	Bäckerei	hinaus
Nach einiger Zeit	blickte	ich mit dem Zug	gekauft
Gestern	habe	nach Brüssel	gespielt

Als sie klein war,	**hat**	sie zum Fenster ich fünf neue Apps sie oft mit Claudia

Noun clauses with *dass* omitted (see **17.2.1b**) have the same order as main clause statements:

Sie glaubt, **sie hat ihn gestern in der Stadt gesehen**

There are some exceptions to the rule that the finite verb must be the second element. These are explained in **19.2.1c**.

The order of infinitives and participles at the end of the clause when there is more than one of these is explained in **19.1.3**.

(b) Questions and commands

In questions and commands the finite verb is the first element. As in main clause statements, any other parts of the verb are in final position, as shown in Table 19.2. In some questions, the verb is preceded by an INTERROGATIVE (i.e. a *w* -word like *was*, *was für ein* ..., etc.):

Table 19.2 The position of the verb in questions and commands

w-word	Verb[1]	Other elements	Verb[2]
Was	**Kommt**	sie bald?	gehen?
Welches Buch	Musst	du schon	gesprochen?
Was für eine Stadt	Hat	dich Peter schon	an!
	Fangen	Sie sofort	auf!
	Pass	doch an der	angestellt?
	hast	Kreuzung	lesen?
	sollen	du da schon	
	ist	wieder	

			wir zuerst Bochum?

Conditional clauses with no *wenn* (see **14.3.3a**), and **comparative clauses** introduced simply by *als*, see **14.5.1b**, have the same order, with the finite verb in first position, e.g.:

Hätte ich Zeit, so würde ich gern mit euch nach Italien fahren

Es war mir, **als wäre ich** hoch über der Erde

(c) Subordinate clauses

In subordinate clauses the finite verb is the final element. The clause is introduced by a conjunction in first position and other parts of the verb come immediately before the finite verb at the end of the clause:

Table 19.3 The position of the verb in subordinate clauses

Conjunction	Other elements	Verb[2]	Verb[1]
weil	ich gestern krank	gekauft	**war**
(der Mann), der	in der Ecke allein	tippen	steht
ob	sie diesen neuen	helfen	hat?
dass	Top		soll
dass	er den Brief		kommt
ohne	sofort		zu stellen
	er morgen		**zu können**
	den Stuhl in die Ecke		
	ihrem Freund		

As Table 19.3 shows, non-finite clauses with an **infinitive with *zu*** (see **11.2**) have the same order as subordinate clauses, with the verb last. There is no conjunction at the beginning of the clause, but there may be a preposition like *ohne* or *um*.

Clauses with participles follow the same pattern, with the verb last:

> **Den Schildern folgend**, fanden sie das Krankenhaus (*Walser*);
>
> eine Betonburg, **wie von einem anderen Stern in diesen Wald gefallen** (*Walser*)

Some exclamations introduced by an interrogative word have the form of questions **or** subordinate clauses, e.g. *Wie der Chef darüber geschimpft hat!* or *Wie hat der Chef darüber geschimpft!*

19.1.2 The 'verbal bracket'

As **Table 19.4** shows, a typical feature of German is that most elements in the clause are sandwiched between the various parts of the verb in main clauses, or between the conjunction and the parts of the verb in subordinate clauses. This construction is known as the 'VERBAL BRACKET'.

This bracket forms the basic framework for all German clauses, and the order of all the other elements in the clause can be described in relation to it:

Table 19.4 The 'verbal bracket'

Initial position	Bracket[1] [	Other elements	Bracket[2]]
Heute	**darf**	sie mit uns ins	**kommen**
Ich	habe	Kino	gesehen
Ich	komme	sie zufällig in der	vorbei
...,	Darf	Stadt	kommen?
...,	Hast	morgen gegen	gesehen?
...,	Komm	zwei Uhr noch	vorbei
	ob	sie heute mit uns	kommen darf
	weil	ins Kino	gesehen habe
	dass	du sie zufällig in	**vorbeikommst**

	der Stadt doch morgen gegen zwei Uhr sie heute mit uns ins Kino ich sie heute zufällig in der Stadt du morgen gegen zwei Uhr noch	

Tables 19.1–19.3 have more examples of verbal brackets. The construction has some typical features:

• In main clauses there is only **one element in initial position** before the first 'bracket' formed by the verb. This position is called the ***Vorfeld*** in German; its function is explained in **19.2**.

• **All other elements** (and this means all elements in questions, commands and subordinate clauses) are positioned **within the bracket**. In German, this is called the ***Mittelfeld***.

As the examples in Table 19.4 show, the order of elements in the *Mittelfeld* is exactly the same for all clause types and it is explained in **19.3 – 19.7**.

• Under certain conditions elements can be placed **after the closing bracket**, i.e. after the part of the verb which is at the end, e.g. *Ich rufe an* **aus London**; *Hat sie dich angerufen* **aus London** ?; *Ich weiß, dass sie dich angerufen hat* **aus London**. This position is called the ***Nachfeld*** in German. Its use is explained in section **19.8**.

19.1.3 The order of verbs in final position

If there is more than one part of the verb at the end of the clause, the order of these is fixed.

(a) Main clause statements and questions

In main clauses, the **auxiliary verb** comes **after the main verb**, as shown in **Table 19.5**:

Table 19.5 Final position in main clauses

Initial	Finite verb	Other elements	Main verb	Auxiliary verb
Ich	**werde**	es ihr doch	sagen	müssen
Sie	**hat**	ihn voriges	schwimmen	gelernt
	Ist	Jahr	erklärt	worden?
	Soll	dir das schon	geschrieben	werden?
		dieser Brief		
		heute noch		

(b) Subordinate clauses

In subordinate clauses the **finite verb** is placed **at the end**, after any **infinitives** or **participles**. The main verb comes before the infinitive or past participle of an auxiliary verb:

Table 19.6 Final position in subordinate clauses (two verbs)

Conjunction	Other elements	Main verb	Auxiliary	Finite verb
Da	ich sie zufällig	gesehen	worden	**habe**
..., weil	er mir das	leihen	werden	wird
..., dass	Geld	gehen		darf
..., wie	sie mit uns	fallen		ließ
(das Haus),	ins Kino	verkaufen		wird
das	sie den Brief	erklärt		sollte
..., dass	sie	verkauft		**muss**
(das Haus),	mir das schon			
das	heute noch			

However, if there are **two infinitives** at the end of the clause (see **11.3.2** and **15.1.2**), the **finite verb comes before both**:

Table 19.7 Final position in subordinate clauses (three verbs)

Conjunction	Other elements	Finite verb	Main verb	Auxiliary
(Ich weiß),	er es bald	**wird**	erledigen	müssen
dass	sie	hat	fallen	lassen
(der Brief),	er die	soll	lösen	können
den	Probleme	hätte	verkaufen	sollen
..., weil	sie	**hat**	kommen	hören
(das Haus),	Paul ihn			
das				
..., dass				

(i) The auxiliary *werden* can also be placed **after** the other verbs, e.g.:

dass er es bald erledigen müssen **wird**

(ii) This rule also applies with *lassen*, *hören* and *sehen* if their infinitive is substituting for a past participle (see **11.3.1**):

der Brief, den sie **hat** fallen lassen

With these verbs, though, it is also possible for the finite verb to be placed at the end:

der Brief, den sie fallen lassen **hat**

(iii) In Austria, the finite verb is often placed **between** the main verb and the auxiliary:

der Flughafen, wo die Luftraumsperre von Mitternacht bis 5 Uhr dauern hätte sollen (*Standard*)

(iv) In those rare cases where there are more than two infinitives or participles the finite verb usually also precedes them:

Tragisch ist, dass der Mann möglicherweise **hätte** gerettet werden können (*SZ*)

(v) Words or phrases which are very closely connected to the main verb, especially the noun portion of phrasal verbs, see **19.7.2**, may be placed between the finite verb and the auxiliaries and participles:

Es gab einen Unterschied, den Gregorius immer deutlicher spürte, je weiter die Nacht fortschritt, ohne dass er ihn **hätte in Worte fassen können** (*P. Mercier*)	*There was a difference which Gregorius felt more and more strongly as the night wore on but he would not have been able to put it into words*

19.1.4 Clauses linked by a coordinating conjunction

i.e. clauses linked by a conjunction such as ***aber***, ***oder*** or ***und*** (see **17.1**).

(a) In coordinated main clauses, the verb is in second position in both

Zu Hause **schreibt** Mutter Briefe und Vater **arbeitet** im Garten

Am Abend **blieb** ich in meinem Zimmer, aber ich **konnte** nicht arbeiten

Du **kannst** mit uns ins Kino kommen oder du **kannst** zu deiner Freundin gehen

If the subject of clauses linked by *sondern* or *und* is identical, it can be omitted ('understood'):

Wir **gingen** nicht ins Kino, sondern **arbeiteten** im Garten

Jürgen **kam** um vier Uhr in Soest an und **ging** sofort zu seiner Freundin

However, if the second clause has another element in initial position,

the subject **must** be inserted again after the verb and cannot be omitted. This is different from English, where the subject can still be understood even if another element comes before the verb. Compare:

Ich schrieb ein paar Briefe und dann ging **ich** zu meiner Tante	*I wrote a few letters and then went to my aunt's*

If an element other than the subject comes in initial position, before the verb, it can be left out (and taken as understood) in following coordinated clauses. The following clauses begin with the verb, and the subject is repeated after it. This stresses that the initial element applies equally to all the clauses:

Schon im April demonstrierten die Bauern, blockierten **sie** Straßen in Ost-Berlin und protestierten **sie** vor der Volkskammer (*Zeit*)	*As early as April the farmers demonstrated, blocked streets in East Berlin and protested in front of the Volkskammer*

In this example, *Schon im April* is here being taken to apply to **all three** coordinated clauses.

However, if no need is felt to emphasize that the initial phrase also applies to the second or subsequent clauses, the subject is placed before the second verb. In practice this is much more usual, especially outside formal written German:

An dem Abend blieb ich zu Hause und **meine Schwester ging** ins Kino	*That night I stayed at home and my sister went to the cinema*

(b) Parallel subordinate clauses linked by coordinating conjunctions

In these, the verb is in final position in both clauses:

Ich weiß, dass sie gestern krank **war** und dass ihr Mann deswegen zu Hause geblieben **ist**	*I know that she was ill yesterday and that's why her husband stayed at home*
Wenn deine Familie dagegen **ist** oder wenn du keine Zeit **hast**, dann wollen wir den Plan fallen lassen	*If your family is against it or if you don't have time, then we'll drop the plan*

If the two clauses have compound tenses with the same auxiliary, the auxiliary can be omitted in the first one:

Nachdem ich Tee **getrunken** und eine Weile **gelesen hatte**, machte ich einen kurzen Spaziergang	*After I had had tea and read for a while, I went for a short walk*

19.2 Initial position in main clause statements

19.2.1 The finite verb is the second element in main clauses

The 'verb second' rule is a basic feature of German word order, and the finite verb in main clauses thus constitutes the first part of the 'verbal bracket' (see **19.1.2**).

(a) Only one element can come before the finite verb

This sentence structure is very different from English, where the subject has to come before the verb, because that is the only way we can tell it is the subject. However, in English other elements can come before the subject, so that there can be several elements in front of the verb:

- **Then** she began to read the letter

• **Then**, **unwillingly**, she began to read the letter

• **Then**, **unwillingly**, **when she had shut the door**, she began to read the letter

In the equivalent German sentences, all but one of these elements has to be moved to another position, so that the **verb stays in second place**, e.g. (among several other possible permutations):

• **Dann** begann sie den Brief zu lesen

Sie begann dann den Brief zu lesen

• **Widerwillig** begann sie dann den Brief zu lesen

Dann begann sie widerwillig den Brief zu lesen

• **Nachdem sie die Tür geschlossen hatte**, begann sie dann widerwillig den Brief zu lesen

Dann begann sie widerwillig den Brief zu lesen, nachdem sie die Tür geschlossen hatte

Because of this fundamental difference, corresponding sentences in English and German often have a very different form.

(b) Many types of element can occur in initial position

The subject is often the most natural element to occur in initial position. It has been estimated that two thirds of main clause statements in German in all registers begin with the subject, and it is not unusual for a whole sequence of sentences to begin with the subject:

> **Tobias** zog heftig an seiner Pfeife. **Die Spucke im Mundstück** prasselte; **man** hörte es, obwohl jetzt, immer deutlicher, auch noch das Schießen der anderen hinzukam… **Sie** waren am Kahn. **Tobias** bückte sich und ließ das Kettenschloss aufschnappen. **Die Luft überm See** flimmerte. **Der Milan hoch oben** tat keinen Flügelschlag. (*Schnurre*)

However, **it is quite wrong to think of the order subject + finite verb as the 'normal' order** (as it is in English), and thus imply that it is 'abnormal' for something else to come before the verb.

Almost all types of element except the negative *nicht* and the modal particles can naturally come first in a main clause. We can illustrate this by giving examples of the elements which are common in first position in main clauses.

(i) an accusative or dative object. This can be a (stressed) pronoun, but it is more usually a noun phrase:

Ihn nahm er zuletzt nach Prag mit (*Hildesheimer*)

Ihr war das Bett viel zu klein

Das Verfahren gegen ihn deutet er als weiteren Beleg für die politische Verfolgung (*Spiegel*)

Mariken hat es sehr Leid getan (*Surminski*)

(ii) an **adverbial** (a single adverb or a phrase):

Natürlich kannte er sämtliche Parfum- und Drogenhandlungen der Stadt (*Süßkind*)

Trotz den feierlichen Londoner Erklärungen wird weiter gekämpft (*NZZ*)

Time and **place adverbials** are especially frequent in initial position:

An dem Abend kam ich mit Mahler in den „Kronenkeller" (*Bachmann*)

In vielen Städten sind kostenlose Parkplätze Mangelware

(iii) another **complement of the verb**, i.e. a genitive object, a prepositional object, a place or direction complement or a predicate complement (see **Table 16.1**):

Zu einem bedauerlichen Zwischenfall kam es, als ... (*Zwerenz*)

Ins Theater/Dahin komme ich jetzt nur sehr selten

Ein guter Kerl ist er trotz alledem

(iv) a prepositional phrase dependent on a noun later in the clause:

Über den Ernst der Lage hat aber auch er keinen Zweifel (*FR*)

(v) the infinitive or participle of a compound tense. This gives particularly strong emphasis to the verb:

Anzeigen wird sie ihn (*Fallada*)

Abgefunden mit ihrer Lage haben sich 16,6 Prozent der Frauen (*LV*)

(vi) a noun belonging with a quantifying determiner later in the clause. This emphasizes the noun very strongly:

Personen wurden nach Polizeiangaben keine verletzt (*NZZ*)

Menschen sind um diese Zeit wenige unterwegs (*Gaiser*)

Occasionally this construction is found with adjectives, e.g.:

Beweise hat er äußerst triftige gebracht

(vii) part of a **phrasal verb**:

Sehr leid hat es mir getan

Zur Abstimmung ist dieser Vorschlag nicht gekommen

(viii) a **subordinate clause**. This can be a finite or non-finite clause

Wohin sie dich gebracht haben, weiß ich nicht (*Surminski*)

Den Schildern folgend, fanden sie das Krankenhaus (*Walser*)

Ihr Geld zu leihen, habe ich doch nie versprochen

(c) Exceptions to the 'verb second' rule

There are a few contexts where more than one element is possible in initial position. In practice, these are only apparent exceptions in special

kinds of construction, i.e.:

(i) Interjections, the particles *ja* and *nein*, and names of persons addressed. As these can be thought of as standing outside the clause proper they are placed before the initial element and followed by a comma, e.g.:

Ach, es regnet schon wieder

Du liebe Zeit, da ist sie ja auch

Ja, du hast Recht

Nein, das darfst du nicht

Karl, ich habe dein Buch gefunden

Lieber Freund, ich kann nichts dafür

(ii) Some other words or phrases link up a clause with what has just been said or the general context. They are seen as standing outside the clause and placed before the initial element with a comma:

Kurzum, die Lage ist nun kritisch

Wissen Sie, ich habe sie nie richtig kennen gelernt

The most frequent words and phrases which can be used like this are:

das heißt (d.h.)	*that is (i.e.)*	so	*well now, well then*
im Gegenteil	on the contrary	unter uns gesagt	between ourselves
kurz, kurzum,	in short	weiß Gott	Heaven knows
kurz gesagt, kurz und gut	in other words	wie gesagt	as I said
mit anderen Worten	well	wissen Sie, weißt du	you know
nun, na	*d'you see*	zugegeben	*admittedly*
sehen Sie, siehst du			

Some words or phrases can be used like the group above, or on their

own in initial position as part of the clause, e.g.:

> Er ist unzuverlässig. **Zum Beispiel**, er kommt immer spät *or* **Zum Beispiel** kommt er immer spät.

Words and phrases often used in this way are:

zum Beispiel	*for instance*	natürlich	*of course*
erstens, zweitens, etc.	*first, secondly*, etc.	offen gesagt	*to be frank*

(iii) A few adverbs and particles can be used together with another element in initial position, i.e.:

Am Ende **freilich** ist etwas Unerwartetes und etwas Neues da (*Borst*)	*To be sure at the end something new and unexpected is there*
Der Buchfink **jedoch** ist nur in den ersten Lebensmonaten lernfähig (*NZZ*)	Chaffinches, on the other hand, are only able to learn in the first months of their life
Selbst in den Chroniken der Städter **schließlich** hat sich die Stadt als revolutionäre Neuheit in die Feudalwelt gestellt (*Borst*)	*After all, even in the chronicles of the burghers the city appears as a revolutionary innovation in feudal society*

The following adverbs and particles can be used in this way:

allerdings	*to be sure, admittedly*	jedenfalls	*at any rate*
also	thus	jedoch	however
freilich	to be sure, admittedly	wenigstens	at least
höchstens	at most	sozusagen	so to speak
immerhin	*all the same*	übrigens	*incidentally*

Alternatively, these can occur on their own in initial position in the

usual way, e.g. ***Freilich*** *ist am Ende etwas Unerwartetes und etwas Neues da.* In practice, this is probably more frequent.

The function of these adverbs is like that of a coordinating conjunction in such constructions, and the conjunctions ***aber*** and ***doch*** have a similar flexibility in their positioning, see **17.1.1c**.

(iv) Some types of subordinate clause are seen as separate from the main clause and are followed by another element before the finite verb, in particular:

• a *was* -clause which relates to the following clause as a whole:

Was so wichtig ist, das Buch verkauft sich gut	*What is so important, the book is selling well*

• concessive clauses of the 'whatever' type (see **17.6.2**):

Es mag noch so kalt sein, die Post muss ausgetragen werden

Wer er auch ist, ich kann nichts für ihn tun

Wie schnell er auch lief, der Polizist holte ihn ein

(v) Two (or more) elements of the same kind can occur together in initial position if they complement or extend one another, being considered, in effect, as a single element. This is very common with adverbials of time and place, e.g.:

Gestern um zwei Uhr wurde mein Mann operiert

Auf dem alten Marktplatz in der Marburger Stadtmitte findet diese Woche ein Fest statt

Gestern Abend in Leipzig fand eine große Demonstration statt

(vi) A highlighted element can occur in isolation from the clause and dislocated from it. It is usually picked up by a pronoun or the like in initial position in the clause proper, e.g.:

Nach Kanada auswandern, das haben sie ja immer gewollt

Die Gudrun, der traue ich ja alles zu

Der Nachbar, der hat uns ja immer davon abhalten wollen

Als ich davon hörte, da war es schon zu spät

Mit Andreas, da wird es bald Ärger geben

Alternatively, the highlighted element can be placed after the clause, with a pronoun within the clause referring forward to it, e.g. ***Der*** *traue ich doch alles zu*, **der Gudrun**. These constructions are typical of everyday speech and are rarely encountered in formal writing.

19.2.2 The initial element functions as the topic of the clause

The TOPIC is the element in a sentence which we mention first to say something more about it:

Der Kranke hat die ganze Nacht nicht geschlafen

(Information is being given about the patient)

In Frankfurt findet jedes Jahr die internationale Buchmesse statt

(We are being told what happens in Frankfurt)

In diesem Zimmer kannst du dich nicht richtig konzentrieren

(We are given information about this room)

In zwei Tagen wird die Reparatur fertig sein

(We are informed about what will be happening in two days)

The topic, in initial position, functions as a starting point for the clause. It comes first because the speaker (or writer) wants to give the listener (or reader) some new information about it.

The following general observations apply to the topic in a German main clause statement:

(a) The element in initial position is often known or familiar to both speaker and listener

A sentence often starts off with something which is known, and new information is given about it later in the sentence. This is shown by the examples above and the following:

Trotz des Poststreiks ist der Brief rechtzeitig angekommen

(You knew about the postal strike, but it's news to you that the letter still got there on time)

An den meisten deutschen Gymnasien ist Englisch die erste Fremdsprache

(You know about German schools but this is something you didn't know about the curriculum)

It is because a clause often begins with an element which is familiar to both speaker and listener that time adverbials are so common in initial position.

(b) The initial element often refers back to something just mentioned

Very often we want to pick up something which has just been referred to and give further information about it. The initial element often takes up a preceding word or phrase in continuous texts or dialogue:

Wir haben ihn im Garten gesucht, aber **im Garten** war niemand zu sehen

Ich sehe ihn oft. **Seinen Bruder** aber sehe ich jetzt recht selten

Ich war drei Wochen auf Sylt. – **Darum** siehst du auch so gut aus.

The answer to a question often repeats an element in the question in initial position and gives the answer later in the clause. Compare:

Was ist gegen Kriegsende geschehen?	– **Gegen Kriegsende** wurden viele Städte zerstört
Wann wurden diese Städte zerstört?	– **Diese Städte** wurden gegen Kriegsende zerstört

(c) The initial element is usually not the main piece of new information

Most main clauses begin with something familiar and the new information appears later. The following sentences sound odd because they start off with an important piece of new information:

?? In einem kleinen Dorf in Böhmen ist Stifter im Jahre 1805 geboren

?? Ein neues Schloss kaufte dieser Mann gestern

?? Scharlachrot ist ihr neues Kleid

These examples show that it is not true that 'any' element can be placed first 'for emphasis'. The first element must be a suitable topic or starting point for the sentence. The strongest emphasis is actually normally on the most important piece of new information which appears later in the clause, see **19.3**.

(d) The subject may sometimes not be suitable for initial position

As shown in **19.2.1b**, the subject is often a natural choice to be the topic of a sentence. However, if the subject involves new information, it is usually more natural to begin with another element which is known and delay the subject until later in the clause:

Vor deiner Tür steht doch **ein neues Auto** *But there's a new car by your front door*

(With strong emphasis on the surprise at seeing the new car)

Zwei Tage darauf wurde gegen die Streikenden *Two days later the military was deployed*

Militär eingesetzt (*Brecht*) *against the strikers*

(*Militär* is the crucial new information; it would sound odd to begin the sentence with it)

It is unusual for a sentence to begin with an indefinite noun, as they normally involve new pieces of information. For this reason, the subject rarely occurs in initial position with verbs of happening, since the event is usually the main new information (see also **19.4.2c**), e.g.:

Gestern ereignete sich **ein schwerer Unfall** in der Mariahilfer Straße

A 'dummy subject' ***es*** (see **3.6.2d**) is often used to move the subject later in the sentence and give it heavier emphasis as important new information, e.g.:

Es kamen **viele Gäste**	*There were many guests*
Es möchte Sie **jemand** am Telefon sprechen	*There's somebody who wants to speak to you on the telephone*

As these examples show, the same effect can be achieved in English by using a construction with *there* (see also **19.2.3d**).

(e) Changing the topic of the sentence

The emphasis in a sentence can be altered by changing the element in initial position. What we choose to place in first position depends on how we want to present the information and what we assume the listener already knows. If we say:

Das Konzert findet heute Abend im Rathaus statt

we assume the listener knows that there is a concert on, and we are

telling them where it is. On the other hand, if we say:

Heute Abend findet ein Konzert im Rathaus statt

we are telling the listener what's happening tonight. We are assuming that they don't know that there's a concert on in the town hall, and we are giving them this information. We can begin with *Heute Abend*, because that is information which the speaker and the listener share. Finally, if we say:

Im Rathaus findet heute Abend ein Konzert statt

we are telling the listener something about the town hall, i.e. that there's a concert on there tonight.

19.2.3 Topics in German and English

The flexibility of German in being able to choose which element to make the topic of a sentence is not shared by English, because the order SUBJECT + VERB at the start of a sentence is fixed.

If we want to make something other than the subject of the verb the topic of a sentence in English, we often have to use more complex constructions than are needed in German, and we explain here some typical English equivalents for these German constructions.

(a) Cleft sentences

If we want to bring an element other than the subject into first position in English, we often put it in a clause of its own with 'it' and the verb 'be', e.g. *It was Angela (who) I gave the book to.* These are called CLEFT SENTENCE constructions. They are not needed in German, where the topic can simply be shifted into initial position before the verb:

Erst gestern habe ich es ihr gesagt *It was only yesterday that I told her*

Dort habe ich sie getroffen *It was there that I met her*

Weil sie oft schwimmt, ist sie fit *It's because she swims a lot that she's fit*

Was man sagt, zählt *It's what you say that counts*

There are many variants of this construction, all with simpler equivalents in German:

Dieses Auto da muss ich kaufen	*That's the car I've got to buy*
Dort/Hier wohnt sie	That/This is where she lives
Das meine ich (auch)	That's what I mean
So macht man das	That's the way to do it
Dann ist es passiert	That's when it happened
Dem gehört es	That's whose it is
Im Frühjahr ist es hier am schönsten	Spring is when it's loveliest here
Zu diesem Schluss gelangt Haas in ihrer neusten Arbeit	*This is the conclusion reached by Haas in her most recent work*

Cleft sentences tend only to be used in German to emphasize the subject of the sentence, e.g.:

Er war es, der mich davon abhielt *It was him who stopped me doing it*

(see also **3.6.2c**). In other cases they typically sound clumsy in German and are best avoided.

(b) English passives for German actives

Passive constructions are often used in English to shift the object of the verb to initial position (as the subject of the verb) and function as its topic. Although passives are not unusual in German, a construction using the active voice, with the object in initial position, is often preferred.

Diesen Bestseller hat die schwedische Autorin während eines langen Aufenthaltes in den USA geschrieben	*This bestseller was written by the Swedish writer during a long stay in the USA*
Meinem Vater hat der Chef sehr freundlich gratuliert	My father was congratulated by the boss in a very kindly way
Auf diese Worte müssen nun Taten folgen (*Zeit*)	*These words must now be followed by deeds*

(c) English constructions with 'have' and a participle

This construction brings the relevant element to the beginning of the sentence by making it the subject of 'have'. There is nothing like this in German, and the element in question is simply placed first:

In diesem Buch fehlen zwanzig Seiten	*This book has (got) twenty pages missing*
In diesem Wald haben voriges Jahr viele Nachtigallen genistet	This wood had a lot of nightingales nesting in it last year
Ihm wurde eine Golduhr gestohlen	He had a gold watch stolen
Ihnen wurden die Fenster eingeworfen	*They had their windows smashed*

(d) English constructions with 'there'

If the subject is the main piece of new information and needs to come later in the sentence for emphasis, English often shifts it from the position before the verb by using a construction with *there*. In German this can be achieved by bringing another element into initial position, typically a time phrase, or a phrase mentioning a place known to both speaker and listener:

Gestern hat es hier wenig geregnet	*There wasn't much rain here*

Vor zwanzig Jahren waren hier viele Zechen	*yesterday* There were a lot of coal-mines here twenty years ago
Da ist doch niemand	But there's nobody there
Im Cineplex laufen diese Woche zwei gute Filme	There are two good films on in the Cineplex this week
Draußen im Regen stand ein alter Herr	*There was an old man standing outside in the rain*

For more similar examples see **19.2.2d**.

19.3 The order of other elements in the sentence

Most elements in a clause come within the VERBAL BRACKET explained in **19.1.2** and shown in Table 19.4. The **relative order of the elements** inside this bracket is **the same for all clause types**, i.e. main clause statements, questions, commands and subordinate clauses, as illustrated in **Table 19.8**:

Table 19.8 Word order within the verbal bracket

	Initial position	Bracket[1] [	Other elements	Bracket[2]]
Main clause	Sie	hat	**ihn heute zufällig in der Stadt**	gesehen
Question	…,	Hat		gesehen?
Subordinate clause		weil		gesehen hat
			sie ihn heute zufällig in der Stadt	
			sie ihn heute zufällig in der Stadt	

This relative order is determined by two basic principles:

• **Elements which are more heavily stressed and convey important new information tend to follow elements which are less stressed**.

The elements inside the verbal bracket are usually put in order of increasing importance, passing from unstressed elements like pronouns to those elements which represent the main new information and are given most emphasis. The element nearest the end of the bracket is typically the most important piece of new information and typically carries the heaviest stress.

• **Elements which are more closely linked to the verb tend to come after elements with a less strong link**.

Many verb complements usually appear immediately before the final part of the verbal bracket. Similarly, direct objects, if they are nouns, normally come after the indirect objects, whose link with the verb is less 'direct'.

Following these general principles, the elements within the verbal bracket tend to occur in the order given in Table 19.9. This order reflects general guidelines for the English-speaking learner, and it should not be taken to represent rigid rules of German word order. However, following these guidelines will almost always produce an acceptable German sentence, although they can be varied in certain ways for reasons of emphasis. Details on the position of each of the groups of elements are outlined in sections **19.4** to **19.8**.

However, English-speaking learners need to be aware of the effect, in terms of emphasis and presentation, of changing the position of elements in a sentence. It is quite possible to end up saying something rather different to what you intend.

Table 19.9 Basic order of the elements in a German sentence

	Topic	Bracket[1] [	Pronouns N A D	Noun subject	Dative noun object	Most adverbials	Accusative noun object	Manner adverbials	Complements	Bracket[2]]
Main clause	Heute Jan Wir	**hat soll wurden**	ihr	mein Freund	dem Chef	heimlich jetzt nachher	eine Mail den Bericht	höflich	daran	**geschickt bringen erinnert**
Question/ command		**Hat Will Geben**	sie es ihm er Ihnen Sie mir			denn trotzdem sofort	den Weg das Geld	richtig		**erklärt? zeigen? zurück!**
Subordinate clause		**…, weil …, da …, dass**	sie	der alte Herr meine Tante	dem Mann	meistens	den Brief	vorsichtig schnell	für seine Hilfe in die Tasche	**gedankt hat fährt stecken wollte**

19.4 The order of noun and pronoun subject and objects

19.4.1 The position of pronouns

(a) Pronouns are usually the first elements in the verbal bracket

Pronouns refer to persons and things already mentioned, or well known to the speaker and listener. They are typically unstressed and for this reason occupy the least prominent position within the verbal bracket, following immediately after the finite verb in a main clause, question or command, or after the conjunction in a subordinate clause:

Gestern hat **ihn** mein Mann in der Stadt gesehen

Hat **ihn** dein Mann gestern in der Stadt gesehen?

Da **ihn** mein Mann gestern in der Stadt gesehen hat, …

Dann hat **es** mein Bruder meinem Vater gegeben

Dann hat **mir** mein Bruder seinen Handy gegeben

(b) Pronouns can be placed before or after a noun subject

This is the only exception to the rule given in **(a)** above. It means that the following would be commonly used alternatives to the first three examples there:

Gestern hat mein Mann **ihn** in der Stadt gesehen

Hat dein Mann **ihn** gestern in der Stadt gesehen?

Da dein Mann **ihn** gestern in der Stadt gesehen hat, …

In practice it is normal for a pronoun to follow a noun subject if the endings of the noun do not show nominative and accusative case clearly, in order to avoid ambiguity:

Gestern hat meine Mutter **sie** in der Stadt gesehen	*My mother saw* **her** *in town yesterday*
Da das Mädchen **sie** in der Stadt gesehen hat, …	*As the girl saw* **her** *in town …*

(*Da sie das Mädchen in der Stadt gesehen hat* would normally be taken to mean 'As **she** has seen the girl in town')

If there are two pronoun objects, it is more usual for them to follow a noun subject, e.g.:

Weil der Lehrer **es ihnen** gezeigt hat, … *Because the teacher showed it to them, …*

Nevertheless, other orders are quite possible, e.g.:

Weil **es** der Lehrer **ihnen** gezeigt hat, …

Weil **es ihnen** der Lehrer gezeigt hat, …

(c) Pronouns come in the order nominative + accusative + dative

Da **sie dich ihm** nicht vorstellen wollte, …	*As she didn't want to introduce you to him …*
Hast **du es uns** nicht schon gesagt?	*Haven't you already told us that?*
Gestern hat **er sie ihr** gegeben	He gave them to her yesterday
Heute will **sie ihm** helfen	She's going to help him today
Hanna hat **es mir** gezeigt	*Hanna showed it to me*

This order is relatively fixed. The only common variation on it is that the pronoun ***es***, in the reduced form ***'s***, often follows a dative pronoun in colloquial speech, e.g. *Heinz hat* **mir's** *gezeigt.*

(d) The reflexive pronoun *sich*

sich has the same position as other accusative or dative pronouns and normally comes immediately after the finite verb or the conjunction (and after a pronoun in the nominative, if there is one):

Gestern hat **sich** der Deutsche über das Essen beschwert

Gestern hat **sich** jemand darüber beschwert

Gestern hat er **sich** darüber beschwert

Er hatte es **sich** (*dat.* !) so vorgestellt

Er hat **sich** (*acc.* !) mir vorgestellt

However, it is occasionally placed after a noun subject, e.g. *Gestern hat der Deutsche* **sich** *über das Essen beschwert*, and, very occasionally, it is placed even later in the clause, e.g. *Gestern hat der Deutsche über das Essen* **sich** *beschwert.* In general, this is only possible with 'true' reflexive verbs used with an accusative reflexive, see **16.3.5**.

(e) Personal pronouns precede other pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns such as ***der***, ***das***, ***dieser***, etc. (see **5.1**) come after personal pronouns like *er*, *dir*, *Ihnen*, *ihm*, etc. (and *man*),

irrespective of case:

Wollen **Sie die** gleich mitnehmen? *Do you want to take those away with you now?*

Hat **ihn dieser** denn nicht erkannt? *Didn't that person recognize him, then?*

Eben hat sie **mir das** gezeigt *She's just shown me that*

19.4.2 The position of noun subject and objects

(a) The noun subject and objects usually have the order nominative + dative + accusative

This group of elements includes not only noun phrases in the nominative, accusative or dative case, but also indefinite pronouns such as *etwas*, *jemand*, *niemand*, *nichts*. As **Table 19.9** shows, they usually follow personal and demonstrative pronouns (but see **19.4.1(b)** for exceptions), and precede other verb complements. Examples:

Gestern hat **jemand meinem Vater eine Kettensäge** geliehen

Warum hat **Manfred seiner Freundin nichts** gebracht?

Ich weiß, dass **mein Freund seiner Tochter diese Bitte** nicht verweigern konnte

Heute hat **der Chef den Mitarbeitern** für ihre Mühe gedankt

Variations on this order usually involve special circumstances of some kind, as explained in the remainder of this section. The position of adverbials in relation to these elements is explained in **19.5**.

(b) The dative object sometimes follows the accusative

object

(i) If the dative object refers to a person, this order indicates it is much more important in context. This possibility is not often used and gives very strong emphasis to the dative object:

Er hat sein ganzes Vermögen **seinem Neffen in Kanada** vermacht (We already know about the fortune, what is surprising is who he left it to and *Neffen* is heavily stressed to indicate this)	*He left his whole fortune to his nephew in Canada*
Er stellte seinen Neffen (auch) **dem Professor** vor (**Who** the nephew was introduced to is the important fact. Compare the sentence *Er stellte dem Professor seinen Neffen vor.* Adding *auch* highlights even more strongly the importance of who he was introduced to)	*He introduced his nephew to the professor (, too)*
als mein Vater diese merkwürdige Geschichte **einem ihm völlig unbekannten Herrn** erzählte (The dative object is indefinite and thus previously unknown to the listener. It is more newsworthy and significant in context than 'this story', which must have been mentioned before)	*when my father told this remarkable story to a gentleman whom he didn't know at all*

(ii) If both accusative and dative objects refer to things, the more important of them in context is placed second:

dass er uns nicht alle zwingt, unsere	*that he's not forcing us all to*

höheren Zwecke **seinem Interesse** zu unterwerfen (*Wolf*)	*subject our higher aims to his personal interest*
Er hat sein Glück **seiner Karriere** geopfert (Compare the very different emphasis in: *Er hat seiner Karriere* **sein ganzes Glück** *geopfert*)	*He sacrificed his happiness to his career*

(iii) A dative object referring to a thing usually follows an accusative object referring to a person. It is rarely possible for the dative object to come first in such contexts:

Sie überantworteten den Verbrecher **der Justiz**	*They delivered up the criminal to justice*
Sie haben den armen Jungen **der Lächerlichkeit** preisgegeben	*They exposed the poor boy to ridicule*

(c) The noun subject can follow an accusative and/or a dative object

If it is the major piece of new information it is possible for the noun subject to follow the object (or other complements). It is then emphasized very strongly, and in practice the subject in such contexts is most often a noun with an indefinite article or no article, or an indefinite pronoun (see also **19.2.2d**):

Glücklicherweise wartet nun in Wien an jeder Ecke **ein Kaffeehaus** (*Zweig*)	*Luckily there is a coffee house waiting for you on every corner in Vienna*
Nun begrüßte den Dirigenten und den Virtuosen **lautes Händeklatschen** (*Kapp*)	Now the conductor and the virtuoso were met with loud applause
Gestern hat meinen Bruder Gott sei dank **niemand** gestört	Thank goodness nobody disturbed my brother yesterday
Er wusste, dass dieser Gruppe	*He knew that something unpleasant*

etwas Unangenehmes bevorstand	*was in store for this group*

Occasionally a subject with a definite article is placed late in the clause if the speaker or writer wants to give it particular emphasis:

Die Tatsache, dass der EU unausweichlich **das Geld** ausgeht	*The fact that the EU's money will inevitably run out*

The late position of an indefinite subject is almost regular with verbs of happening and the like, and it is also frequent in passive sentences:

Er wusste, dass seinem Chef **eine große Ehre** zuteil geworden war	*He knew that a great honour had been bestowed on his boss*
Zum Glück ist meinem Bruder da **nichts** passiert	Luckily nothing happened to my brother
Deshalb können den Asylbewerbern **keine Personalausweise** ausgestellt werden	*For this reason no identity cards can be issued to the asylum-seekers*

19.5 The place and order of adverbials

An adverbial can be a single word (e.g. *trotzdem*, *heute*), or a phrase with or without a preposition (e.g. *den ganzen Tag*, *mit großer Mühe*). This difference in form has no effect on word order. The classification of adverbs in **Chapter 7** applies equally to all adverbials.

The placing of adverbials is more flexible than that of any other element in the sentence. This reflects their general freedom of occurrence as elements optionally added to give additional information, see **16.1.4**. This section deals first with the placing of adverbials in relation to other elements (chiefly the noun subject and objects), and then explains the ordering of adverbials where more than one is present.

19.5.1 The position of adverbials and the noun subject and objects

As shown in Table 19.9, adverbials typically come **after the noun subject and the dative object**, but **before the accusative object**. However, the relative position of adverbials and noun subjects and objects depends very much on their relative importance in the clause. Specifically, that element appears later in the clause which the speaker wants to stress most strongly or which conveys the most important new information.

(a) Unstressed adverbials can sometimes precede the noun subject and/or the dative object

This applies in particular to single words, in particular adverbs of attitude and modal particles, e.g. *bestimmt*, *sicher*, *vielleicht*, etc. Unstressed short adverbs of time and place like *da*, *dort*, *hier*, *gestern*, *heute*, *morgen*, *dann*, *damals*, *daher* also often occur early in the clause, immediately after the personal pronouns:

Sie wird **wohl gleich** ihrer Freundin simsen	*She'll probably text her friend straightaway*
Ich weiß, dass sie es **sicher** meinem Vater empfehlen wird	I know she'll be sure to recommend it to my father
Sie ist **heute** ihrem Freund aus Bonn begegnet	She met her friend from Bonn today
Hat sie **schon damals** ihrem Opa die ganze Geschichte erzählt?	*Did she tell her grandad the whole story at that time?*

In most of the above contexts the adverb could equally well follow the noun subject or objects, and it would then be more strongly emphasized. Compare *Hat sie ihrem Opa* **schon damals** *die ganze Geschichte erzählt?* However, such permutation is not possible in contexts where the noun subject or object is a vital piece of new information (especially if it is indefinite) and needs to be placed where

it carries most stress:

Das hat **bisher** keiner gemerkt	*Nobody's noticed it up to now*
Da war **doch** niemand	Nobody was there, though
lch bin **dort** einem Freund von deinem Bruder begegnet	*I ran into a friend of your brother's there*

A sentence like *Da war niemand doch* sounds very odd.

(b) The order of adverbials and noun objects depends on emphasis

i.e. how important they are in the context of the whole clause or sentence. The element which is being presented as more important comes later. Compare the following:

Er hat diese neuen Wagen **im Sommer** gekauft

(The stress is on **when** he bought the new car)

Er hat im Sommer **diesen neuen Wagen** gekauft

(The emphasis is on **what** he bought)

Sie haben Fußball **im Park** gespielt

(This tells us **where** they were playing football)

Sie haben im Park **Fußball** gespielt

(This tells us **what** they were playing in the park)

Das hat **gestern** ihr Kollege meinem Verlobten erzählt

(**Who** was told is the point at issue)

Das hat ihr Kollege **gestern** meinem Verlobten erzahlt

(Who did the telling is seen as relatively unimportant)

Das hat ihr Kollege meinem Verlobten **gestern** erzählt

(Prominence is given to the time when the fiancé was told)

Although, from a grammatical point of view, there is flexibility in the order of these elements, in a particular context only one may be appropriate. Thus, in answer to the question *Wann hat er diesen neuen Wagen gekauft?* one would naturally use the first alternative above, as the second would sound strange.

(c) Adverbials of manner follow the noun objects

(and **all** other adverbials, see **19.6.2**). This is because **how** something was done is typically the most important new information:

Meiner Meinung nach hat das Quartett das Stück **viel zu schnell** gespielt	*In my opinion the quartet played the piece much too fast*
Er warf den Ball **sehr vorsichtig** über den Gartenzaun	*He threw the ball very carefully over the garden fence*

19.5.2 The relative order of adverbials

If a clause contains more than one adverbial, they most often occur in the order:

attitude – time – reason – viewpoint – place – manner

(a) Adverbials of attitude

This group includes all the modal particles (see **Chapter 9**) and other adverbials which express some attitude on the part of the speaker towards what is being said (see **7.4.2**), e.g. *angeblich*, *leider*, *vermutlich*, *zum Glück*, *zweifellos*, etc.:

Sie wollten **doch** vor zwei Uhr in Magdeburg sein

Er ist **vielleicht** schon am Montag abgereist

(b) Time adverbials

As explained in **7.3** these can indicate a **point in time** (e.g. *bald*, *voriges Jahr*, *am kommenden Sonntag*), **frequency** (e.g. *stündlich*, *jeden Tag*) or **duration** (e.g. *lange*, *seit Montag*, *ein ganzes Jahr*).

Sie ist **vor zwei Tagen** trotz des Sturms nach Reutte gewandert

Die Streikenden blieben **vier Stunden lang** vor dem Rathaus versammelt

If there is more than one time adverbial in a clause, they are usually placed in the order

point of time – duration – frequency

Within these categories **the general precedes the particular**, e.g. *jeden Tag um vier Uhr*.

(c) Adverbials of reason

i.e. adverbials expressing **circumstance** (e.g. *zu unserem Erstaunen*), **condition** (e.g. *gegebenenfalls*), **purpose** (e.g. *zur Durchsicht*) or **reason** (e.g. *wegen des Unfalls*), see **7.4.3**. Passive agents introduced by *von* or *durch* (see **13.3**) also occur in this position:

Sie hat den Brief **trotzdem** mit der Hand geschrieben

Der Brand wurde **von der freiwilligen Feuerwehr** schnell gelöscht

(d) Viewpoint adverbials

e.g. *finanziell* 'from a financial point of view', see **7.4.1b**. Phrases with *mit* and *ohne* also occur in this position:

Polen ist in den letzten Jahren **wirtschaftlich** viel stärker geworden

Sie geht **mit Begeisterung** in die Tanzschule

(e) Place adverbials

See **7.1**. Place adverbials must be distinguished from direction complements, see **(h)** below.

Die Band spielt aber morgen Abend **im Festsaal Kreuzberg**

Ich habe bis 18 Uhr **im Büro** gearbeitet

(f) Manner adverbials

i.e. those which indicate how an action is carried out, see **7.4.1**. Adverbs of manner are almost always the final element in the clause before any complements:

Sie ist heute mit ihrem Porsche **viel zu schnell** in die Kurve gefahren

Der Vorschlag wurde von den Anwesenden **einstimmig** angenommen

(g) The order of adverbials can be varied for emphasis

The relative order given above is only a guide to a 'neutral' order of the adverbs, assuming they all have roughly similar emphasis, and it is not a rigid rule.

As with the relative order of adverbials and the noun subject and objects, variation in the order of adverbials follows the general

principle given in **19.3**, i.e. an adverbial can be given more or less emphasis by being placed later or earlier in the clause. This often depends on what the speaker considers to be the main new information in context, which needs to be emphasized, e.g.:

Paula ist zum Glück **gestern** nicht zu schnell gefahren

Paula ist gestern **zum Glück** nicht zu schnell gefahren

(The adverbial in bold is made more prominent in each case by being placed later.)

Viele deutsche Städte wurden gegen Kriegsende **von den Allierten** zerstört

Viele deutsche Städte wurden von den Allierten **gegen Kriegsende** zerstört

(Placing the time adverbial after the *von* -phrase in the second example gives it particular prominence, possibly in reply to a question about when it happened.)

Sie hat sehr lange **dort** auf ihre Mutter gewartet

Sie hat dort **sehr lange** auf ihre Mutter gewartet

(Time adverbials usually precede place adverbials, but they can follow for emphasis.)

(h) The 'time – manner – place' rule

Many manuals of German for foreign learners have traditionally given a rule that adverbials occur in the order time – manner – place. However, this can be quite misleading, since, as shown above, adverbials normally occur in the order **time – place – manner**:

Der junge Tenor hat gestern in Wien **hervorragend** gesungen

Die Kinder wollten heute auf der Wiese **ungestört** spielen

Nevertheless, many **elements indicating direction or place** can be

seen to occur **after manner adverbials**, at the end of the verbal bracket and immediately before the final part of the verb. However, **these are complements of the verb** – so-called **locative complements – not adverbials**, see **16.8** and **19.8**. These **complements follow all adverbials**, including those of manner:

Paula ist gestern viel zu schnell **in die Kurve** gefahren

Andreas wollte gestern mit seiner Freundin gemütlich **nach Freising** wandern

Sie hat die schöne Vase sehr vorsichtig **auf den Tisch** gestellt

Müllers wohnen einsam in einem großen Haus **im Wald**

Astrid lag erschöpft **auf der Couch**

Sie sind wegen des schlechten Wetters widerwillig **zu Hause** geblieben

The elements in bold in these examples are **direction complements** depending on **verbs of motion**, or **place complements** depending on **verbs of position**. As explained in **18.1.4**, complements are more closely linked to the verb than adverbials, which simply give additional circumstantial information, and following the principles given in **19.3**, they come at the end of the verbal bracket. The traditional 'time – manner – place' rule relies on the fact that, in practice, place and direction phrases tend to be more often complements than adverbials.

19.6 The position of *nicht*

Other negative elements like ***nie*** 'never' and ***kaum*** 'hardly', 'scarcely' occupy the same position in the clause as ***nicht***, and the following guidelines apply equally to them.

The position of *nicht* depends on what it refers to. For example, in a sentence like *Anita hat den Roman nicht gelesen* it relates to the whole content of the sentence – Anita didn't carry out the action of reading

the novel. However, we could say *Anita hat nicht* **den** *Roman gelesen*, meaning that she didn't read that particular novel (but possibly another one).

(a) If *nicht* relates to the whole content of the clause, it is placed near the end

i.e. just before any adverbs of manner and verb complements. Thus:

(i) *nicht* follows any noun objects

Er hat aber seine neue Stelle **nicht** erwähnt	*But he didn't mention his new job*
Er hat mir das Buch **nicht** gegeben	He didn't give me the book
Verkaufe die Bücher **nicht** !	Don't sell the books
Ich weiß, dass sie ihren Bruder gestern **nicht** gesehen hat	*I know she didn't see her brother yesterday*

However, *nicht* precedes any objects with no article which are part of a fixed verb phrase (see **19.7.2**):

Sie hatte damals **nicht** Klavier gespielt *She didn't play the piano then*

(ii) *nicht* follows all adverbials except those of manner

Sie haben sich seit langem **nicht** gesehen	*They haven't seen each other for a long time*
Den Turm sieht man von hier aus **nicht**	You can't see the tower from here
Ich wollte es ihr trotzdem **nicht** geben	I didn't want to give it to her all the same
Das ist mir in diesem Zusammenhang **nicht** aufgefallen	That didn't occur to me in that context
Wir sind wegen des Regens **nicht**	We didn't walk to Bernau because it was raining

nach Bernau gewandert	They didn't play well yesterday
Sie haben gestern **nicht** gut gespielt	*I don't know it in detail*
Ich weiß es **nicht** ausführlich	

(iii) *nicht* **precedes most verb complements**, i.e. all complements of the verb **except** the subject and the direct or indirect objects:

Sie sind gestern **nicht** nach Mailand geflogen	*They didn't fly to Milan yesterday*
Sie legte das Buch **nicht** auf den Tisch	She didn't put the book on the table
Wir konnten uns **nicht** an diesen Vorfall erinnern	We couldn't remember that incident
Er blieb **nicht** in Rostock	He didn't stay in Rostock
Sie ist sicher **nicht** dumm	She's certainly not stupid
Sie war heute **nicht** im Büro	*She wasn't at the office today*

However, *nicht* can follow prepositional objects or direction complements **if** it is relatively unstressed and the complement has to be emphasized. Compare:

Das kann ich doch **nicht von ihm** verlangen	*I can't ask that of him*
Das kann ich doch **von ihm nicht** verlangen	*I can't ask that of him*

(b) If *nicht* applies only to one particular element in the clause it precedes it

Sie hat mir **nicht** das Buch gegeben (not the book, but something else)	*She didn't give me the book*
Sie sind **nicht** am Freitag nach Kreta geflogen (not Friday, but some other day)	They didn't fly to Crete on Friday
Nicht mir hat er das Buch gegeben, sondern meiner Schwester	*It wasn't me he gave the book to, it was my sister*

Compare the 'partial' negation in the first example above with 'global' negation of the whole clause, with *nicht* in its usual position: *Sie hat mir das Buch nicht gegeben* simply means 'She didn't give me the book'.

As an alternative, the stressed element can appear on its own in the initial position, with the *nicht* later in the clause, e.g. ***Mir*** *hat er das Buch* **nicht** *gegeben*. This is very common if the contrast is implicit, i.e. if there is no following clause or phrase with *sondern*.

Unstressed *nicht* is often used in this way in tentative or rhetorical questions or exclamations, e.g.:

Hast du **nicht** die Königin gesehen!?	*Didn't you see the Queen!?*
War **nicht** dein Vater eigentlich etwas enttäuscht!?	Wasn't your father really a bit disappointed!?
Was du **nicht** alles weißt!	*Don't you know a lot!*

19.7 The position of verb complements

With the exception of the subject and objects of the verb, which have their own position in the clause, the **complements of the verb come as far to the right as possible within the verbal bracket** (see Table 19.9). This position is relatively fixed, irrespective of emphasis, and only very exceptionally are complements found earlier in the clause.

19.7.1 Verb complements

The following complements occur in final position within the verbal bracket:

(a) prepositional objects

Nun wird er sich sicher **um seine beiden Kinder** kümmern können	*Now he will certainly be able to look after his two children*
Sie hat in der Ankunftshalle lange **auf ihren Mann** gewartet	She waited for her husband in the arrivals hall for a long time
Wir haben uns vorgestern lange und ausführlich **darüber** unterhalten	*We talked about it in detail for a long time the day before yesterday*

(b) the predicate complement of copular verbs

i.e. *sein*, *werden*, *bleiben*, *scheinen*, *heiße n*, see **16.6**. This complement may be a noun or an adjective:

Herbert war immerhin längere Zeit **der beste Schüler** in unserer Klasse	*All the same, Herbert was top of our class for a long time*
Sie wurde plötzlich **blass**	She suddenly turned pale
Dann scheinen mir diese Bedingungen jedoch **etwas hart**	*In that case these conditions seem rather hard to me, though*

(c) genitive objects

weil der Verletzte dringend **eines Arztes** bedurfte	*because the injured man urgently needed a doctor*

(d) locative (i.e. direction) complements with verbs of motion

Warum hat Peter den Stein plötzlich **in den Bach** geworfen?	*Why did Peter suddenly throw the stone into the stream?*
Sie ist mit ihrem Porsche zu schnell **in die Kurve** gefahren	She took the bend too fast in her Porsche
Wir möchten nächste Woche **nach Emden zu meinen Eltern** fahren	*We want to go to my parents' in Emden next week*

(e) locative (i.e. place) complements with verbs of position

Er befand sich plötzlich **in einem dunklen Saal**	*He suddenly found himself in a dark room*
Er wollte unter keinen Umständen **in Duisburg** bleiben	He didn't want to remain in Duisburg under any circumstances
Sie haben lange **in dieser Hütte** gewohnt	*They lived in that hut for a long time*

19.7.2 The noun portion of phrasal verbs

Extended verb phrases can consist of a noun (often an infinitive or other verbal noun) used in a set phrase with a verb, e.g.:

Abstand halten Abschied nehmen Angst haben ins Rollen geraten

These are a rather special type of complement, as they are very closely linked to the verb in a way that makes them similar to separable prefixes. They are always placed at the end of the verbal bracket, and they could even be considered as forming part of the bracket rather than as separate elements within the clause.

Er hat sie durch seine Unvorsichtigkeit **in die größte Gefahr** gebracht	*He brought her into very great danger through his carelessness*
Ich habe ihr alle meine Bücher **zur Verfügung** gestellt	I put all my books at her disposal
Gestern hat uns der Minister von seinem Entschluss **in Kenntnis** gesetzt	The Minister informed us of his decision yesterday
Sein Chef hat ihn vorige Woche sehr **unter Druck** gesetzt	His boss put him under a lot of pressure last week
Ich merkte, wie der Wagen langsam **ins Rollen** kam	*I noticed the car slowly starting to roll forwards*

In subordinate clauses, these phrases can come after the auxiliary verb and thus be part of the final verbal bracket, e.g. *Ich habe keine Ahnung, wie der Wagen* **hätte ins Rollen kommen können** or *Die Zeit scheint vorbei, da man die eigenen Vorurteile* **hätte über Bord werfen können** (*Presse*) (see also **19.1.3b**).

19.8 Elements following the final verbal bracket: the *Nachfeld*

The last element in a German clause is normally the final part of the verb. However, there are some contexts where it is usual or possible to place an element after this.

This construction is known as ***Ausklammerung*** in German, and it is becoming increasingly frequent, even in formal writing. This section explains where it is preferable or acceptable in modern German.

19.8.1 Subordinate and infinitive clauses

(a) Subordinate clauses are not normally enclosed within the verbal bracket

Sentences with clauses enclosed within one another and a cluster of verbs at the end (called ***Schachtelsätze***, because they are like sets of boxes inside each other) can be cumbersome and are best avoided. Taken to extremes they can be quite impenetrable, like the following example:

> Das „Vorsicht-Glatteis"-Verkehrszeichen, das letzte Nacht, die Frostbildung, was für den Autofahrer, der etwas getrunken und ein Auto gefahren, das abgefahrene Reifen hat, hat, erhöhte Gefahren mit sich bringt, brachte, total beschädigt wurde, wird nicht mehr aufgestellt.

As a general rule it is preferable to complete one clause, with the final part of its verbal bracket, before starting another. In the following pair of sentences, the second alternative, though not ungrammatical, is nowadays regarded as clumsy:

> Ich konnte den Gedanken nicht loswerden, **dass wir ihn betrogen hatten**
>
> Ich konnte den Gedanken, **dass wir ihn betrogen hatten**, nicht loswerden

A relative clause, especially a restrictive one, can be separated from the noun it refers to in order to avoid enclosing it:

> Und wie dürfte man eine Zeitung verbieten, **die sich wiederholt und nachhaltig für die Wahl der staatstragenden Partei eingesetzt hat** ? (*Spiegel*)

Enclosing the relative clause results in a clumsy sentence:

> *Und wie dürfte man eine Zeitung,* ***die sich wiederholt und nachhaltig fur die Wahl der staatstragenden Partei eingesetzt hat*** *, verbieten?*

(b) Infinitive clauses are not usually enclosed within the verbal bracket

In this way, the following are usual:

> Sie hatten beschlossen **vor dem Rathaus zu warten**
>
> Er hat versucht **sein Geschäft zu verkaufen**

rather than:

> Sie hatten **vor dem Rathaus zu warten** beschlossen
>
> Er hat **sein Geschäft zu verkaufen** versucht

However, enclosing infinitive clauses is obligatory in some constructions, notably with some 'semi-auxiliary' verbs. Details are given in **11.2.4**.

19.8.2 Comparative phrases introduced by *als* or *wie*

These are frequently placed outside the verbal bracket, especially those with *wie*:

Gestern haben wir einen besseren Wein getrunken **als diesen**	*Yesterday we drank a better wine than this one*
Ich wusste, dass sie ebenso ärgerlich war **wie ich**	*I knew she was just as annoyed as me*

However, enclosing phrases like these within the verbal bracket is not unusual:

Die Volkstracht hat sich in Oberbayern stärker **als anderswo in Deutschland** erhalten (*Baedeker*)	*Local costumes have been retained in Upper Bavaria longer than elsewhere in Germany*
ein Mann, der **wie ein Italiener** aussah	*a man who looked like an Italian*

Enclosure is especially frequent within longer clauses, especially in writing:

da die Orangen und Zitronen von den Kindern **wie Schneebälle** über die Gartenmauern geworfen wurden (*Andres*)

19.8.3 Other elements

Other elements of the clause are sometimes placed after the verbal bracket. There are three main reasons for this:

• to give strong emphasis to the element placed last:

Du hebst das auf **bis nach dem Abendessen** (*Baum*)

• as an afterthought:

Ich habe sie doch heute gesehen **in der Stadt**

• In order not to overstretch the verbal bracket, e.g.:

Seitdem Rodrigue seine Chronik begonnen hatte, freute er sich darauf, sie zu beschließen **mit der Darstellung der Regierung dieses seines lieben Schülers und Beichtkindes**

The following elements are often placed outside the verbal bracket:

(a) Adverbials with the form of prepositional phrases

These are commonly excluded for the reasons given above:

> Hallo, ich rufe an **aus London** (*Telecom advert*)
>
> Vieles hatte Glum schon gesehen **auf seinem Weg von seiner Heimat bis über den Rhein hinweg** (*Böll*)

In general, constructions like these are more typical of colloquial speech than formal writing. However, *Ausklammerung* is not uncommon in writing, especially if the prepositional phrase is relatively long, as in the second example above, or if a further clause (typically a relative clause) depends on the element excluded, e.g.:

> Von hier aus konnte man noch wenig sehen **von der kleinen Stadt**, die am anderen Ufer im Nebel lag

(b) Prepositional objects

Prepositional objects are the only verb complement to be regularly and frequently excluded in standard German:

> Er hätte das merken können **an den gelegentlichen Rückblicken und dem Arm**, der entspannt auf der freien Vorderlehne lag (*Johnson*)
>
> Er darf sich entschädigt fühlen **für ganze Jahre Underdog-Dasein im Straßenverkehr** (*Zeit*)
>
> Du solltest dich nicht zu sehr freuen **auf diese Entwicklung**

However, not all prepositional objects can be excluded in this way and sentences like *Ich habe vor dem Bahnhof gewartet auf meine Freundin* are unacceptable to many native speakers. No clear rules have yet been identified about the circumstances in which prepositional objects can or cannot be excluded.

(c) Other verb complements

i.e. the subject or the accusative and dative objects, or place and direction complements. These are not usually excluded in standard German, although very lengthy elements may occasionally be, e.g.:

> Wir haben aus Steuergeldern gebaut **Wohnungen für nahezu zwanzigtausend Menschen**

Otherwise, such exclusions are restricted to informal registers, e.g. *Gestern habe ich gesehen* **Toms Onkel aus Dortmund**.

(d) Adverbs

Exclusion of simple adverbs is very common in colloquial speech, but avoided in formal writing:

> Bei uns hat es Spätzle gegeben **heute**

Sie sollen leise reden **hier**

Ich bin nach Trier gefahren **deshalb**

Hat es euch gefallen **dort** ?

Word formation

We can distinguish in German between **simple words** (or 'root words') like *Kind*, *dort* and *schön*, which cannot be broken down, and **complex words** like *kindisch*, *dortig* and *Schönheit*, which are made up of more than one component and are derived from simple words in some way.

Knowing about German word formation (called 'DERIVATION'), i.e. how these complex words are made up, is invaluable for extending the learner's vocabulary. The importance of being able to recognize the meaning of a whole word from its parts, and identify patterns like ***Dank – danken – dankbar – Dankbarkeit – Undankbarkeit*** cannot be overestimated. Series of words like this are often more transparent in German than in English, as we can see when we compare this set to English *thanks – to thank – grateful – gratitude – ingratitude*.

This chapter explains the most frequent means of word formation in German:

- methods of **word formation** (section **20.1**)
- the formation of **nouns** (section **20.2**)
- the formation of **adjectives** (section **20.3**)
- the formation of **verbs** (sections **20.4–20.7**)
  - with **inseparable prefixes** (section **20.5**)
  - with **separable prefixes** (section **20.6**)
  - with **variable prefixes** (section **20.7**)

- other means of **verb formation** (section **20.8**)

20.1 Methods of word formation

20.1.1 Complex words are formed in three main ways

(a) by means of a prefix or suffix

In general, PREFIXES and SUFFIXES do not occur as words in their own right, but are only used with simple words to form other words, e.g.:

- **prefixes**:

die Sprache	→	die **Ur**sprache	schön	→	**un**schön
stehen	→	**be**stehen	besser	→	**ver**bessern

- **suffixes**:

gemein	→	die Gemein**heit**	bedeuten	→	die Bedeu**tung**
der Freund	→	freund**lich**	denken	→	denk**bar**
der Motor	→	motor**isieren**	die Kontrolle	→	kontroll**ieren**

Prefixes are most often used to create nouns from nouns, adjectives from adjectives, or verbs from other verbs or from nouns and adjectives. Suffixes are most common to make nouns from adjectives or verbs or adjectives from nouns or verbs; they are seldom used to form verbs.

(b) by means of vowel changes

These vowel changes are often linked with particular suffixes, but they can occur on their own. The following vowel changes are used in word formation:

• ***Umlaut***:

der Arzt	→	die Ärztin		der Bart	→	bärtig
der Druck	→	drücken		scharf	→	schärfen

• **Ablaut**, i.e. vowel changes like those of the strong verbs, see **12.1.2**. *Ablaut* in word formation is chiefly restricted to use with strong verb roots:

aufsteigen	→	der Aufst**ie**g		werfen	→	der W**u**rf
beißen	→	b**i**ssig		schließen	→	schl**ü**ssig

These vowel changes, especially *Ablaut*, are usually no longer productive (see **20.1.2**) in modern German.

(c) by forming compound words

In compounding, a new word is made up from two (or more) existing words:

der Staub + saugen	→	der **Staubsauger**		hell + blau	→	**hellblau**
der Rat + das Haus	→	das **Rathaus**		die Brust + schwimmen	→	**brustschwimmen**

Sometimes there is a linking sound between the two words, e.g.:

der Bauer + der Hof	→	der Bauer **n** hof
das Land + der Mann	→	der Land **s** mann

The ease with which compounds can be formed is a distinctive feature of German (and the source of the notorious long words), and the extensive use of compounds is typical of modern German, especially in technical registers.

20.1.2 Productive and unproductive word formation patterns

If new words are still being created by means of a particular pattern (e.g. by adding a particular prefix or suffix), that pattern is called **productive**. For example, the suffix - *bar* is commonly used to make adjectives from nouns (= English '-able', '-ible', see **20.3.1a**), and new words in *-bar* are regularly found, like *machbar* 'do-able' or even from recent English loans like *downloadbar*.

On the other hand, many abstract nouns from adjectives are found with the suffix - ***e***, and *Umlaut* of the root vowel, see **20.2.1b**, e.g.:

groß → die Größe gut → die Güte hoch → die Höhe lang → die Länge

However, no new nouns are created from adjectives in this way; the pattern is **unproductive**. Nevertheless, it is still important to know about it, because there are so many words in the language which have been formed with this pattern.

This chapter deals with all the common patterns of word formation in German, whether they are productive or unproductive.

20.2 The formation of nouns

20.2.1 Noun derivation by means of suffixes

The following suffixes are common, although not all of them are still fully productive. Many are associated with a particular gender, see **1.1**.

(a) *-chen*, *-lein* (neuter)

These suffixes are very productive and used to form **diminutives from nouns**:

das Auge → das Äug**lein** *little eye*
das Buch → das Büch**lein** *little book*
die Karte → das Kärt**chen** *little card*
die Stadt → das Städt**chen** *little town*

The vowel of the stressed syllable usually has ***Umlaut*** if possible, although exceptions are common, especially with names, e.g. *Kurtchen*. *-chen* is commoner than *-lein*, which is mainly restricted to words ending in *-ch*, *-g* or *-ng*, and to archaic or poetic language. It was originally South German, but, in practice, colloquial South German speech now uses other forms from the local dialects to form diminutives, e.g. *-li* (Switzerland), *-(e)le* (Swabia), *-la* (Franconia), *-(er)l* (Austria and Bavaria).

In some cases, derivations with both *-chen* and *-lein* from the same noun are used with a difference in meaning, e.g. *Fräulein* 'girl', *Frauchen* 'mistress' (e.g. of a dog).

In non-standard colloquial speech, *-chen* is sometimes added to plurals in *-er*, e.g. *Kinderchen*.

(b) *-e* (feminine)

(i) Nouns in - ***e*** from verbs denote an action or an instrument. The latter is still productive, especially in technical registers:

absagen → die Absag**e** *refusal*
pflegen → die Pfleg**e** *care*
bremsen → die Brems**e** *brake*
leuchten → die Leucht**e** *light*

(ii) **Nouns in - *e* from adjectives** denote a quality. The vowel has *Umlaut* if possible. This pattern is no longer productive, having been replaced by - *heit* or - *(ig)keit* (see **(e)** below):

groß → die Größ**e** *size*
stark → die Stärk**e** *strength*

(c) *-ei*, *-erei*, *-elei* (feminine)

These suffixes are productive and form **nouns from verbs or from other nouns**. The suffix - *ei* is always stressed, see **21.1.6b**.

(i) Nouns in - *ere* ***i*** from verbs are mainly pejorative, indicating a

repeated, irritating action:

fragen	→	die Frag **erei** *lots of annoying questions*

The basis can be a whole phrase, e.g.:

Rekorde haschen → die Rekordhasch **erei** *record hunting*

- *ei* is used in the same sense **from verbs in - *eln* and - *ern***, e.g.:

lieben → die Liebel **ei** *flirtation*

- *ele* ***i*** and - ***erei*** also have pejorative meaning if used with a **noun base**:

Fremdwörter	→	die Fremdwört **elei** *using (too) many foreign words*
die Sklave	→	die Sklav **erei** *slavery*

(ii) Nouns in - *ei* from nouns (often a noun in - *er*) denote the place where something is done:

das Datum	→	die Dat **ei** (*computer) file* (i.e. where data are kept)
der Bäcker	→	die Bäcker **ei** *bakery*

(d) -*er*, -*ler*, -*ner* (masculine)

These productive suffixes form **nouns from verbs or nouns**. The root vowel occasionally has *Umlaut*:

(i) Most **nouns in** - *er* **from verbs** denote the **person who does**

something, often a profession:

einbrechen	→	der Einbrech**er** *burglar*	schreiben	→	der Schreib**er** *writer*
lehren	→	der Lehr**er** *teacher*	betteln	→	der Bettl**er** *beggar*

The base can be a whole phrase, e.g. *einen Auftrag geben* → *der Auftraggeb* ***er*** 'client', 'customer'.

New formations can also be formed from foreign, especially English roots, e.g. *der Blueser* (from *die Blues*) 'blues singer/fan'.

(ii) - *le* ***r*** (less commonly - *ne* ***r***) is used to derive nouns from other nouns to indicate the person who does something. Some are pejorative:

das Bühnenbild	→	der Bühnenbildn**er** *stage designer*	die Rente	→	der Rentn**er** *pensioner*
			der Sport	→	der Sportl**er** *sportsman*
die Kunst	→	der Künstl**er** *artist*	die Wissenschaft	→	der Wissenschaftl**er** *scientist*
der Profit	→	der Profitl**er** *profiteer*			

In some instances - *e* ***r*** is used rather than - *le* ***r*** to form nouns from other nouns:

die Eisenbahn	→	der Eisenbahn**er** *railway worker*	die Taktik	→	der Taktik**er** *tactician*

(iii) Some **nouns in** - *er* **from verbs** denote an **instrument**:

bohren	→	der Bohr**er** *drill*	empfangen	→	der Empfäng**er** *receiver*

The base can be a whole phrase, especially in technical language:

Staub saugen → der Staubsaug **er** *vacuum cleaner*

(iv) **Nouns in** - *er* **from place names** designate the **inhabitants**:

Frankfurt	→	der Frankfurt**er**	Österreich	→	der Österreich**er**
Hamburg	→	der Hamburg**er**	Wien	→	der Wien**er**

Some of these have slight irregularities:

Hannover → der Hannover**aner** Zürich → der Zür**cher**

(e) *-heit, -(ig)keit* (feminine)

These suffixes are used productively to form **abstract nouns from adjectives** denoting a quality:

bitter → die Bitter**keit** *bitterness*
gleich → die Gleich**heit** *similarity*
eitel → die Eitel**keit** *vanity*

heftig → die Heft**igkeit** *violence*
geschwind → die Geschwind**igkeit** *speed*
genau → die Genau**igkeit** *precision*

Whether *-heit*, *-keit* or *-igkeit* is used is not wholly regular. *-heit* is the most common form; *-keit* is used with adjectives ending in *-bar*, *-ig*, *-lich* and *-sam* and with most in *-el* and *-er* (but not all, e.g. *die Dunkelheit*, *die Sicherheit*). *-igkeit* is used with adjectives ending in *-haft* and *-los* (e.g. *die Glaubhaftigkeit*) and a few others, especially those which end in *-e* (e.g. *müde* → *die Müdigkeit*).

(f) *-in* (feminine)

The productive suffix *-in* forms nouns denoting the **feminine** of persons and animals. The root vowel usually has *Umlaut*:

der Arzt → die Ä rzt**in** *woman doctor*
der Fuchs → die Füchs**in** *vixen*
der Präsident → die Präsident**in** *female president*
der Rocker → die Rocker**in** *female rock singer*

If the base word ends in *-erer*, e.g. *der Herausforderer* 'challenger', the final *-er* is dropped before adding the suffix *-in*, e.g. *die Herausforderin*.

For the use of these feminine forms see **1.1.7b**.

(g) *-ling* (masculine)

This productive suffix is used to form **nouns from verbs or adjectives**.

(i) Nouns in *-ling* from **verbs** denote **persons who are the object of the action**:

prüfen	→	der Prüf**ling** *examinee*	strafen	→	der Sträf**ling** *prisoner*

(ii) Nouns in *-ling* from **adjectives** designate **persons possessing that quality**:

feige	→	der Feig**ling** *coward*	fremd	→	der Fremd**ling** *stranger*

Similar formations denoting plants and animals are common, e.g. *der Grünling* 'greenfinch', *der Kohlweißling* 'cabbage white (butterfly)', but they are no longer productive.

(h) *-nis* (neuter or feminine)

Nouns in - *ni s* are **abstract nouns from verbs or adjectives**. Those from verbs (which often have irregular forms or use the past participle as a base) often denote the result of the verbal action. The suffix is no longer productive:

erleben	→	das Erleb**nis** *experience*	finster	→	die Finster**nis** *darkness*
ersparen	→	das Erspar**nis** *savings*	geheim	→	das Geheim**nis** *secret*
gestehe	→	das Geständ**nis** *confession*	wild	→	die Wild**nis** *wilderness*

(i) *-schaft* (feminine)

The productive use of this suffix is to form **nouns from other nouns** designating a **collective** or a **state**:

der Student → die Studenten **schaft**

der Freund → *student body*
die Freund **schaft**
friendship

Other derivational patterns with *-schaft*, i.e. from adjectives (e.g. *die Schwangerschaft* 'pregnancy') or from participles (e.g. *die Errungenschaft* 'achievement'), are no longer productive.

(j) *-tum* (neuter)

- *tu* ***m*** is used productively with **nouns referring to persons to form nouns** denoting **institutions**, **collectives** or **characteristic features**:

der Beamte → das Beamten**tum** *civil servants*
der Deutsche → das Deutsch**tum** *Germanness*
der König → das König**tum** *monarchy*
der Papst → das Papst**tum** *papacy*
das Volk → das Volks**tum** *national traditions*

(k) *-ung* (feminine)

This very productive suffix is used to form **nouns from verbs** referring to the **action of the verb**:

bedeuten *mean* → die Bedeu**tung** *meaning*
landen *land* → die Land**ung** *landing*
bilden *form* → die Bild**ung** *formation*
töten *kill* → die Tö**tung** *killing*

20.2.2 Noun derivation by means of prefixes

All these prefixes except *Ge-* are stressed, see **21.1.6c**. The gender of nouns with prefixes is the same as that of the root noun, with the exception of those in *Ge-*, which are mostly neuter, see **1.1.2e**.

(a) *Erz-* = 'arch-', 'out and out'

der Bischof → der **Erz** bischof *archbishop*

der Gauner → der **Erz** gauner *out and out scoundrel*

(b) *Ge-*

Nouns in *Ge-* (often with the suffix *-e* in addition) can be formed from verbs or from other nouns:

(i) **Nouns in *Ge* - from verbs** denote a **repeated or protracted activity**. They often have a pejorative sense, like nouns in *-erei*, see **20.2.1c**, to which those in *Ge-* are often an alternative:

laufen → das **Ge** laufe *running about, bustle* (esp. to no real purpose)

schwätzen → das **Ge** schwätz *idle talk, gossip*

(ii) **Nouns in *Ge* - from other nouns are collectives**. The root vowel has *Umlaut* if possible (and *-e-* changes to *-i-*):

der Ast → das **Ge** äst *branches* der Berg → das **Ge** birge *mountain range*

(c) *Grund-* = 'basic', 'essential'

die Tendenz → die **Grund** tendenz *basic tendency*

(d) *Haupt-* = 'main'

der Bahnhof → der **Haupt** bahnhof *main station*

(e) *Miss-* denotes an opposite or a negative

It sometimes has a pejorative sense:

der Brauch → der **Miss** brauch *misuse* der Erfolg → der **Miss** erfolg *failure*

Fehl - is now probably more productive than ***Miss*** - to express an opposite or a negative, e.g.:

die Einschätzung → die **Fehl** einschätzung *false estimation*

(f) *Mit-* = co-, etc.

der Arbeiter → der **Mit** arbeiter *colleague, collaborator*

der Reisende → der **Mit** reisende *fellow traveller*

(g) *Nicht-* = non-

der Raucher → der **Nicht** raucher *non-smoker*

(h) *Riesen-* has an augmentative sense

der Erfolg → der **Riesen** erfolg *enormous success*

Riesen- is particularly common in speech, and informal registers of German are rich in other augmentative prefixes, e.g. ***Bomben*** *geschäft*, ***Heiden*** *lärm*, ***Höllen*** *durst*, ***Mords*** *apparat*, ***Spitzen*** *belastung*, ***Super*** *hit*, ***Teufels*** *kerl*, ***Top*** *manager*, etc.

(i) *Rück-* occurs with many nouns related to verbs in *zurück-*

die Fahrt → die **Rück** fahrt *return journey* (cf. *zurückfahren*)

The full form *Zurück-* is usually kept with nouns in *-ung* from verbs, e.g. *zurückhalten → die Zurückhaltung.*

(j) *Un-* = opposite, abnormal

der Mensch → der **Un**mensch *inhuman person* die Summe → die **Un**summe *vast sum*

die Ruhe → die **Un**ruhe *unrest* das Wetter → das **Un**wetter *bad weather*

(k) *Ur-* = 'original'

die Sprache → die **Ur**sprache *original language*

20.2.3 Other methods of noun formation

(a) Many nouns are formed from verb roots without a suffix

These are almost all masculine, see **1.1.2a**. This means of derivation is no longer productive, although German still has many words which have been formed this way. It is most common with strong verbs (which may themselves be prefixed), and the root vowel is often changed:

ausgehen	→	der Ausgang *exit*	schließen	→	der Schluss *close*
brechen	→	der Bruch *break*	stechen	→	der Stich *stab, sting*
ersetzen	→	der Ersatz *replacement*	zurückfallen	→	der Rückfall *relapse*

(b) Verb infinitives can be used as nouns

e.g. *das Aufstehen* 'getting up', *das Reiten* 'riding'. These often correspond to English 'ing'-forms used as nouns and refer to the action as such. They are all neuter and further information about them is given in **11.4**.

(c) Adjectives and participles can be used as nouns

e.g. *der/die Fremde* 'stranger', *der/die Vorsitzende* 'chair(person)' (see **6.2** for further examples). Such nouns from adjectives often co-exist with derived nouns:

fremd → der Fremde *and* der Fremdling

einbrechen → der Einbrechende *and* der Einbrecher

In these cases the noun derived by means of a suffix has a more extended sense than the adjective used as a noun. Both *der Fremde* and *der Fremdling* mean 'stranger', but the latter is rather pejorative. *der Einbrecher* means, specifically, 'burglar', but *der Einbrechende* simply means 'the person breaking in at present' (who may not necessarily be a criminal).

20.2.4 Compound nouns

The ease with which compound nouns can be formed is a feature of German, and the use of compounds has increased significantly in recent years. In particular, while two-part compounds like *Krankenhaus* and *Schreibtisch* have always been common, there has been an extension in the use of compounds with three or more elements over the last hundred years, especially in technical and official language, e.g. *Fahrpreisermäßigung*, *Autobahnraststätte*, *Roggenvollkornbrot*. Even so, compounds with more than four elements, such as *Rindfleischetikettierungsüberwachung-saufgabenübertragungsgesetz* are (thankfully) still unusual.

Compound nouns usually take the gender of the last part, see **1.1.8a**.

(a) Types of noun compound

Almost any part of speech can combine with a noun to form a

compound, e.g.:

(i)	**noun** + **noun**	das Haar +	→	die
(ii)	**adjective** +	die Bürste	→	Haarbürste
(iii)	**noun**	edel + der	→	*hair brush*
(iv)	**numeral** +	Stein	→	der Edelstein
(v)	**noun**	drei + das Rad	→	*gem*
(vi)	**verb** + **noun**	hören + der	→	das Dreirad
	preposition +	Saal		*tricycle*
	noun	unter + die		der Hörsaal
	adverb +	Tasse		*lecture theatre*
	noun	jetzt + die		die Untertasse
		Zeit		*saucer*
				die Jetztzeit
				the present day

(b) A linking element is inserted in many noun + noun compounds

e.g. *die Liebling* ***s*** *farbe*, *die Straße* ***n*** *ecke*. These linking elements (called ***Fugenelemente*** in German) occur in about a third of all compounds, and they are notoriously unpredictable. A few words form some compounds with a link and some without one, e.g. *der Lobgesang* **but** *die Lob* ***es*** *hymne*. Other words form some compounds with one link and others with a different one, e.g. *das Tag* ***e*** *buch* **but** *die Tag* ***es*** *zeitung*. Furthermore, Austrian and Swiss usage often differs from that in Germany, e.g. Austrian *der Zug* ***s*** *führer* for German *der Zugführer*. In practice, each compound needs to be learnt with its link. These linking elements depend on the **first** part of the compound, and the following are found:

(i) - *e* - occurs with a few nouns, especially those with a plural in - *e*. The root vowel often has *Umlaut* if the plural has *Umlaut*, e.g. *der Pferd* ***e*** *stall*, *der G* ***ä*** *ns* ***e*** *braten*.

(ii) - *(e)s* - (i.e. the ending of the genitive) occurs with many masculine and neuter nouns (and a few feminines), e.g. *die Wind **es** eile, das Kalb **s** leder, der Lieb **es** brief.*

(iii) - *(e)n* - is used with many feminine nouns, with 'weak' masculine nouns (see **1.3.2**) and with adjectives used as nouns, e.g. *der Scheib **en** wischer, die Held **en** tat.*

(iv) - *er* - is found with some nouns which have a plural in *-er. Umlaut* is usually present if possible, e.g. *die Männ **er** stimme, die Rind **er** zucht.*

(c) Limitations on the formation of compound nouns

It seems easy to make up compound words in German, but there are restrictions on their formation which are not fully understood, and it is not possible to give clear rules. A few hints are given here for guidance, but it is good practice for foreign learners to be cautious in forming compounds which they have not actually seen or heard used.

In German compound nouns, the first element carries the main stress and defines the second. Thus, *Rathaus* is a type of *Haus* and *Tiefkühltruhe* is a kind of *Truhe*. A compound like *Blauhimmel* for 'blue sky', on the other hand, is not possible, because it is not a type of sky. We must say *der blaue Himmel.*

In particular, compounds like *Vatermitarbeiter* or *Ulmbesuch*, whose first element is an individual person or place, are odd because they are not 'types' of colleague or visit; a full phrase: *der Mitarbeiter meines Vaters* or *sein Besuch in Ulm* is preferred. However, under the influence of English, compounds like this are now becoming more widely used, although purists still consider them incorrect.

Adjective + noun compounds tend to be very restricted. In practice they always mean something rather different from when the relevant adjective is used as an epithet with the noun. Thus, *eine Großstadt* is more than *eine große Stadt*, and *ein Junggeselle* is not simply *ein junger*

Geselle.

(d) Semi-compound suffixes

A few nouns are so widely used in modern German as the basis for compound nouns that they can be considered as suffixes rather than as distinct words in their own right. Words with these semi-suffixes are typical of official German. The most frequent are:

(i) - *gut*

Nouns in *-gut* express the set of material used in a process, or the totality of things expressed in the first element:

streuen *scatter, grit* (roads) → das Streugut *material for gritting roads*

der Gedanke *thought* → das Gedankengut *whole body of thought*

(ii) - *werk*

Nouns in *-werk* from nouns (often plural, and often denoting plants or materials) are typically collective, indicating the whole of something:

das Blatt *leaf* → das Blätterwerk *foliage*

der Zucker *sugar* → das Zuckerwerk *sweets, candies*

(iii) - *wesen*

Nouns in *-wesen* express the whole systematic collectivity of people and institutions involved in the first element:

die Gesundheit *health* → das Gesundheitswesen *health system*

die Schule *school* → das Schulwesen *school system*

(iv) - *zeug*

Nouns in *-zeug* express a set of things used in a particular activity:

nähen *sew* → das Nähzeug *sewing kit*

schlagen *hit* → das Schlagzeug *drum kit*

20.3 The formation of adjectives

20.3.1 Adjective derivation by means of suffixes

(a) *-bar*

This very productive suffix forms **adjectives from verbs** with the sense of English '-able', '-ible':

brauchen → brauch**bar** *usable* essen → ess**bar** *edible*

Adjectives in *-bar* are a frequent alternative to passive constructions, see **13.4.8**.

(b) *-(e)n, -ern*

These suffixes are formed from **nouns denoting a material**, and the adjective indicates that the qualified noun is made from that material. The form *-ern* is normally associated with *Umlaut*:

das Gold → gold**en** *golden* das Silber → silb**ern** *silver*
das Holz → hölz**ern** *wooden* der Stahl → stähl**ern** *steel*

Note the difference between adjectives in *-(e)n* or *-ern* and those in *-ig* (see **(d)** below) from the same noun, e.g. *silbern* '(made of) silver', *silbrig* 'silvery' (i.e. like silver).

(c) *-haft*

Adjectives formed **from nouns** with the suffix *-haft* indicate a **quality like the person or thing** denoted by the noun, e.g.:

der Greis → greisen**haft** *senile* der Held → helden**haft** *heroic*

(d) *-ig*

-ig is a common and productive suffix, often associated with *Umlaut*. It is mainly used to form **adjectives from nouns**:

(i) with the idea of possessing what is denoted by the noun, e.g.:

das Haar → haar**ig** *hairy* der Staub → staub**ig** *dusty*

(ii) indicating a **quality like the person or thing denoted by the noun**:

die Milch → milch**ig** *milky* der Riese → ries**ig** *gigantic*

Adjectives in *-ig* can be formed from whole phrases: *blauäugig* 'blue-eyed', *heißblütig* 'hot-blooded'.

(iii) indicating duration (from time expressions):

zwei Stunden → zweistünd **ig** *lasting two hours*

Note the difference between these adjectives in *-ig* (which express duration) and those in *-lich* (which express frequency), e.g. *zweistündlich* 'every two hours', see **(f)** below.

(iv) *-ig* forms **adjectives from adverbs**, e.g.:

dort	→	dort**ig**	heute	→	heut**ig**
ehemals	→	ehemal**ig**	morgen	→	morg**ig**
hier	→	hies**ig**	sonst	→	sonst**ig**

(e) *-isch*

This is a productive suffix, often associated with *Umlaut*, used mainly to form adjectives from nouns:

(i) adjectives from proper names and geographical names:

England	→	engl**isch** *English*	Homer	→	homer**isch** *Homeric*
Europa	→	europä**isch** *European*	Sachsen	→	sächs**isch** *Saxon*

(ii) adjectives which indicate a **quality like that of the person or thing** denoted by the noun. They are often pejorative:

der Held	→	held**isch** *heroic*	das Kind	→	kind**isch** *puerile*
der Herr	→	herr**isch** *imperious*	der Wähler	→	wähler**isch** *fastidious*

Compare the pejorative *kindisch* with the neutral *kindlich* 'childlike'.

(iii) adjectives from **nouns of foreign origin**. These adjectives are always stressed on the penultimate syllable, see **21.1.6d**:

die Biologie	→	biolog**isch** *biological*	die Musik	→	musikal**isch** *musical*
die Mode	→	mod**isch** *fashionable*	der Nomade	→	nomad**isch** *nomadic*

(f) *-lich*

This is a common suffix with a wide range of functions. Adjectives formed with *-lich* often have *Umlaut*:

(i) Adjectives from nouns in *-lich* indicate a relationship to that person or thing, or indicate the possession of the quality denoted by it:

der Arzt	→	ärzt**lich** *medical*	der Fürst	→	fürst**lich** *princely*
der Buchstabe	→	buchstäb**lich** *literal*	der Preis	→	preis**lich** *in respect of price*
der Feind	→	feind**lich** *hostile*	der Tod	→	töd**lich** *fatal, deadly*

This is the only use of *-lich* which is still productive in modern German.

(ii) Adjectives in *-lich* from time expressions denote **frequency**:

zwei Stunden → zweistünd **lich** *every two hours*

For the difference between adjectives in *-ig* and *-lich* from time expressions, see **(d)** above.

(iii) Adjectives in *-lich* from verbs indicate **ability**:

bestechen → bestech**lich** *corruptible* verkaufen → verkäuf**lich** *saleable*

This use of *-lich* is no longer productive, having been replaced by *-bar*, see **(a)** above.

(iv) Adjectives in *-lich* from other adjectives usually indicate a **lesser degree of the relevant quality**:

arm → ärm**lich** *shabby; humble*
klein → klein**lich** *petty*
krank → kränk**lich** *sickly*
rot → röt**lich** *reddish*

(g) *-los*

-los is used to form **adjectives from nouns** and **corresponds to English '-less'**:

die Hoffnung → hoffnungs**los** *hopeless* die Wahl → wahl**los** *indiscriminate*

(h) *-mäßig*

This suffix is very productive, especially in formal registers, to derive **adjectives from nouns**:

(i) with the sense of 'in accordance with':

die Gewohnheit	→ gewohnheits **mäßig** *habitual*
der Plan	→ plan **mäßig** *according to plan*

-gemäß is an alternative to *-mäßig* in this sense, but it is less common, e.g. *plangemäß*, *ordnungsgemäß*.

(ii) with the sense of '**in respect of something**', '**pertaining to**':

der Instinkt	→ instinkt **mäßig** *instinctive*
der Verkehr	→ verkehrs **mäßig** *relating to traffic*

(iii) with the sense of '**like someone or something**':

der Fürst	→ fürsten **mäßig** *princely*
das Lehrbuch	→ lehrbuch **mäßig** *like a textbook*

(i) -sam

This suffix is no longer productive. Adjectives in *-sam* have two main sources:

(i) from verbs (especially reflexive verbs), expressing a possibility or a tendency:

sich biegen	→ bieg **sam** *flexible*	sparen	→ spar **sam** *thrifty*

(ii) from **nouns**, **indicating a quality**:

die Furcht	→ furcht **sam** *timid*	die Gewalt	→ gewalt **sam** *violent*

20.3.2 Adjective derivation by means of prefixes

These prefixes are **usually stressed and form adjectives from other adjectives**.

(a) *erz-, grund-, hoch-* have intensifying meaning

erz- is mainly used with a rather negative sense, whereas *grund-* and *hoch-* tend to be more positive. Both *erz-* and *grund-* are rather limited in use:

reaktionär → **erz** reaktionär *very reactionary*

ehrlich → **grund** ehrlich *thoroughly honest*

verschieden → **grund** verschieden *totally different*

begabt → **hoch** begabt *highly talented*

intelligent → **hoch** intelligent *very intelligent*

(b) *un-* negates and/or produces an opposite meaning

It closely resembles English 'un-'. It is not always stressed, see **21.1.6c**.

artig	→ **un** artig *naughty*
vorsichtig	→ **un** vorsichtig *incautious*
wahrscheinlich	→ **un** wahrscheinlich *improbable*

If an adjective already has a simple word as its opposite (e.g. *klug – dumm*), the form in *un-* gives a negative rather than an opposite. Thus, whilst *dumm* means 'stupid', *unklug* means 'unwise'. In general, only adjectives with a positive meaning can form an opposite with *un-*. Thus, whilst *unschön* from *schön* is in common use, one does not find * *unhässlich* from *hässlich*.

(c) *ur-* with adjectives usually intensifies the sense

alt	→	**ur** alt *very old*	komisch → **ur** komisch *very comical*

Sometimes, it gives the idea of 'original' or 'typical', e.g. *urdeutsch* 'typically German'.

20.3.3 Adjective compounding

In general, adjective compounding is similar to noun compounding, see **20.2.4**.

(a) Types of adjective compounds

In practice only the following are common:

(i)	**noun** +	die Pflicht + treu	→ pflichttreu
(ii)	**adjective**:	trinken + fest	*dutiful*
(iii)	**verb** + **adjective**:	klein + laut	→ trinkfest *able to hold one's drink*
	adjective + **adjective**:		→ kleinlaut *meek*

Adjective + adjective compounds are often 'additive', i.e. the qualities of both adjectives apply, e.g. *nasskalt* 'cold and wet'.

(b) Many noun + adjective compounds have a linking element

These are similar to those in noun + noun compounds, see **20.2.4b**. - *s* - and - *n* - are the most common, e.g. *geist* ***es*** *krank*, *gesundheit* ***s*** *schädlich*, *seite* ***n*** *verkehrt*.

(c) Some compound elements forming adjectives have

now become suffixes

A number of adjectives are so widely used in modern German as the basis for compound adjectives that they can be considered as suffixes rather than as distinct words.

(i) with the sense of having or possessing something:

-haltig → koffein **haltig** **-stark** → charakter **stark**

-reich → erlebnis **reich** **-(s)voll** → rücksicht **svoll**

(ii) with the sense of lacking something:

-arm → nikotin **arm** **-leer** → gedanken **leer**

-frei → alkohol **frei**

(iii) with the sense of being protected from something:

-dicht → schall **dicht** **-fest** → hitze **fest**

-echt → kuss **echt** **-sicher** → kugel **sicher**

(iv) with the sense of being similar to something:

-artig → kugel **artig** **-gleich** → masken **gleich**

-förmig → platten **förmig**

(v) with the sense of being capable of something:

-fähig → strapazier **fähig**

(vi) with the sense of being worth(y of) something:

-wert → lesens **wert** **-würdig** → nachahmens **würdig**

(vii) with the sense of needing something:

- **bedürftig** → korrektur **bedürftig**

20.4 Verb formation: general

New verbs are formed in German primarily by means of prefixes – largely because verbs have inflectional suffixes to show categories like tense, person and number. There are three main types of verb prefix in German:

• **inseparable prefixes** like ***be*** -, *emp* -, ***ent*** -, ***er*** -, ***ge*** -, ***ver*** - and ***zer*** -, e.g. *bestellen, erstehen, verbringen*. They are called inseparable prefixes because they always remain fixed to the root, and they are **always unstressed**, see **21.1.6c**. Their past participle does not have the prefix *ge-*, (e.g. *bestellt*, *erstanden*, *verbracht*, see **10.2.1h**). The formation of verbs with inseparable prefixes is treated in section **20.5**.

• **separable prefixes**, of which there are a large number. The most typical are like prepositions, e.g. ***ab*** -, ***an*** -, ***auf*** -, etc., e.g. *abfahren*, *ankommen*, *aufmachen*, but they can also come from nouns, adverbs and other parts of speech, e.g. *teilnehmen*, *totschlagen*, *weglaufen*. They are called separable prefixes because they are separated from the root under certain conditions, e.g. *Wir* **kommen** *in München sehr früh* **an** (see **10.2.1i**), and they are **always stressed**, see **21.1.6c**. The formation of verbs with separable prefixes is dealt with in section **20.6**.

• **variable prefixes**, which are separable in some cases and inseparable in others, often with a difference in meaning, e.g. *Sie* **übersetzte** *den Brief* 'She translated the letter' – *Sie* **setzten** *zum anderen Ufer* **über** 'They crossed over to the other bank'. The prefixes *durch-, über-, um-* and *unter-* and one or two less common ones are variable. They are explained in section **20.7**.

Other means of verb derivation are explained in **20.8**.

20.5 Inseparable verb prefixes

Many patterns of forming verbs with inseparable prefixes are common

and productive.

20.5.1 *be-*

(a) *be-* makes intransitive verbs transitive

See **16.3.4a**. If the simple intransitive verb is used with a dative object or a prepositional object, that becomes the accusative object of the prefixed verb with *be-*, e.g.:

jdn. **be** dienen *serve sb.* (☒ jdm. dienen)

eine Frage **be** antworten *answer a question* (☒ auf eine Frage antworten)

(b) With transitive verbs *be-* can change the action to a different object

jdn. mit etwas **be** liefern *supply sb. with sth.* (☒ jdm. etwas liefern *deliver sth. to sb.*)

(c) *be-* forms verbs from nouns with the idea of providing something

With some verbs the suffix *-ig-* is added, and a few have *Umlaut*:

die Nachricht	→ **be** nachrichtigen *notify*	die Sohle	→ **be** sohlen *sole (a shoe)*
der Reifen	→ **be** reifen *put tyres on*	das Wasser	→ **be** wässern *irrigate*

(d) *be-* makes verbs from adjectives

These have the sense of giving someone or something that quality. With some verbs the suffix *-ig-* is added:

feucht	→ **be** feuchten *moisten*	gerade	→ **be** gradigen *straighten*
frei	→ **be** freien *liberate*	ruhig	→ **be** ruhigen *calm*

20.5.2 *ent-*

The prefix *emp-* is a variant of *ent-*, used before some roots beginning with *f*, e.g. *empfehlen*, *empfinden*.

(a) Verbs in *ent-* from verbs of motion have the idea of escaping or going away

What or who is being escaped from usually appears as a dative object with these verbs, see **16.4.2c**, e.g.:

gleiten	→ jdm. **ent** gleiten *slip away from sb.* (e.g. glass from hand)
laufen	→ jdm./etwas **ent** laufen *run away/ escape from sb./sth.*
reißen	→ jdm. etwas **ent** reißen *snatch sth. from sb.*

(b) Verbs in *ent-* can have the sense of removing something

These can be based on nouns, adjectives or other verbs, with *ent-* often

corresponding to the English prefixes ‘de-’ or ‘dis-’:

das Gift	→ **ent** giften	scharf	→ **ent** schärfen
der Mut	*decontaminate*	spannen	*tone down*
	→ **ent** mutigen		→ **ent** spannen
	discourage		*relax*

20.5.3 *er-*

(a) Verbs in *er-* from other verbs often express the achievement or conclusion of an action

bitten	→ **er** bitten *get (sth.) by asking for it*
schießen	→ **er** schießen *shoot (sb.) dead*

A productive use of *er-* is to form verbs from verbs or nouns with the idea of acquiring something by the action expressed by the simple verb or the noun. Compare *erbitten* above and the following:

arbeiten	→ Er hat etwas **er** arbeitet	*He got sth. by working for it*
die List	→ Er hat etwas **er** listet	*He got sth. through cunning*

This use of *er-* is so productive that it is widely used with new roots from English, e.g. *etwas erbloggen* ‘get sth. by blogging’, *etwas ergoogeln* ‘to get sth. by googling’.

A handful of verbs in *er-* from other verbs point to the start of an action, e.g. *erklingen* ‘ring out’, *erbeben* ‘tremble’.

(b) Verbs in *er-* formed from adjectives express a change

of state

i.e. either intransitive verbs with the idea of becoming something, or transitive verbs with the idea of making somebody or something have the quality expressed by the adjective. These verbs often have *Umlaut* of the root vowel, e.g.:

blind	→ **er** blinden	frisch	→ **er** frischen
rot	*become blind*	leichter	*refresh*
	→ **er** röten *turn red, blush*		→ **er** leichtern *make easier*

20.5.4 *ver-*

This is the most widely used inseparable prefix, with a wide range of meanings. The following are the most frequent or productive:

(a) Many verbs in *ver-* from other verbs express the idea of finishing or 'away'

blühen	→ **ver** blühen	hungern	→ **ver** hungern
brauchen	*fade* (flowers)	klingen	*starve to death*
	→ **ver** brauchen *consume*		→ **ver** klingen *fade away* (sounds)

(b) Some verbs in *ver-* from other verbs convey the notion of 'wrongly' or 'to excess'

biegen → **ver** biegen *bend out of shape* salzen → **ver** salzen *put too much salt in sth.*

lernen → **ver** lernen *unlearn, forget*

This use is very productive and used widely with new roots, e.g. *Vergooglen Sie keine Zeit!* 'Don't waste your time searching on google'.

Some reflexive verbs in *ver-* have the idea of making a mistake, e.g.:

fahren → sich **ver** fahren *get lost, take a wrong turning*

wählen → sich **ver** wählen *misdial*

A few verbs in *ver-* are opposites, e.g.:

achten	→ **ver** achten *despise*	kaufen	→ **ver** kaufen *sell*

(c) Verbs in *ver-* formed from adjectives often express a change of state

As with *er-*, these can be intransitive verbs with the idea of becoming something, or transitive verbs with the idea of making somebody or something have the quality expressed by the adjective:

arm	→ **ver** armen *become poor*	länger	→ **ver** längern *make longer*
einfach	→ **ver** einfachen *simplify*	stumm	→ **ver** stummen *become silent*

Some verbs in *ver-* from nouns have a similar meaning, e.g.:

das Unglück	→ **ver** unglücken *have an accident*
der Sklave	→ **ver** sklaven *enslave*

(d) Many verbs formed from nouns with *ver-* convey the idea of providing with something

das Glas	**ver** glasen *glaze*	der Körper	**ver** körpern *embody*
das Gold	**ver** golden *gild*	der Zauber	**ver** zaubern *enchant*

This use of *ver-* is very productive and now widely used with originally English roots, e.g. *Verlink deine Seite gegen Geld* 'Link up your website for cash'.

20.5.5 *zer-*

Verbs in *zer-*, which are mainly formed from other verbs, always convey the notion of 'in pieces':

beißen	**zer** beißen *bite into pieces*	fallen	**zer** fallen *disintegrate*
brechen	**zer** brechen *smash*	streuen	**zer** streuen *disperse*

20.6 Separable verb prefixes

SEPARABLE PREFIXES are so called because they are separated from the root under certain conditions, e.g. *Wir kommen sehr früh in München* **an**. For the difference between them and inseparable prefixes, see **20.4**. Most separable prefixes also exist as independent words, chiefly as adverbs, prepositions, nouns or adjectives. The forms of separable verbs, in particular the position of the prefix, are explained in **10.2.1i**. Separable prefixes are always **stressed**.

20.6.1 Simple separable prefixes

Most of these derive from prepositions or adverbs and their meanings are often transparent. The examples below illustrate some common and

productive patterns of derivation.

Prefixes from prepositions expressing direction (e.g. *ab-*, *an-*, *auf-*) often have a less transparent or figurative sense because direction can be indicated by using a prefix with *her-* or *hin-*, see **7.2.4e**.

(a) *ab-*

(i) = 'away': **ab** fahren *depart, leave* **ab** fliegen *take off*

(ii) = 'down': **ab** steigen *get down* **ab** setzen *put, set down*

(iii) completing an action: **ab** drehen *switch off* **ab** laufen *wear out* (e.g. shoes)

(b) *an-*

(i) with the idea of approaching: **an** kommen *arrive* **an** sprechen *address (sb.)*

(ii) indicating the start of an action: **an** machen *switch on* **an** brennen *catch fire*

(c) *auf-*

(i) = 'up' or 'on': **auf** bleiben *stay up* **auf** setzen *put on* (hat, water)

(ii) with the idea of a sudden start: **auf** lachen *burst out laughing* **auf** leuchten *light up*

(d) *aus-* = 'out' often pointing to the completion of an action:

aus brennen *burn out* **aus** bloggen *finish a blog*

(e) *ein-* is related to the preposition in, often with the idea of becoming used to something:

ein fahren *run in* (i.e. new car) sich **ein** leben *settle down*

(f) *los-* most often has the meaning of beginning something:

los gehen *set off, start* **los** reißen *tear off, away*

(g) *mit-* indicates accompanying or cooperating:

mit arbeiten *cooperate* **mit** gehen *go with sb.*

(h) *vor-*

(i) going on or preceding: **vor** gehen *go ahead; be fast* (clock) **vor** stoßen *push forward*

(ii) demonstrating: **vor** lesen *read aloud* **vor** machen *show sb. how to do sth.*

(i) *weg-* = 'away':

weg bleiben *stay away* **weg** laufen *run away*

fort- is a less common (and more formal) alternative to *weg-* with some verbs: *fortbleiben*, *fortlaufen*.

(j) *weiter-* = 'on', 'continue':

weiter fahren *drive on* **weiter** machen *continue*

(k) *zu* -

(i) indicating the direction of the action: **zu** hören *listen to* **zu** lächeln *smile at*

(ii) adding: **zu** geben *add* **zu** zahlen *pay more*

(iii) closing: **zu** drehen *turn off* (tap) **zu** gehen *close shut*

(l) Other simple prefixes are less frequent or no longer productive

bei-	**bei** treten	*join* (e.g. club)	**bei** tragen	*contribute*
da-	**da** bleiben	*stay on/ behind*	**da** stehen	stand there
dar-	**dar** stellen	depict, represent	**dar** legen	explain, expound
fehl-	**fehl** gehen	miss one's way	**fehl** greifen	miss one's hold
inne-	**inne** haben	*occupy* (position)	**inne** halten	pause
nach-	**nach** ahmen	*imitate*	**nach** gehen	follow
nieder-	**nieder** brennen	*burn down*	**nieder** lassen	*lower, let down*

20.6.2 Compound separable prefixes

Some compound elements, mainly from adverbs, are widely used as separable prefixes

dabei-	(indicating	**dabei** stehen	*stand close by*
daneben-	proximity)	**daneben**	*miss* (a shot)
davon-	(indicating	schießen	*hurry away*
dazu-	missing sth.)	**davon** eilen	be added
empor-	('away')	**dazu** kommen	look up
entgegen-	(indicating an	**empor** blicken	receive, accept

überein-	addition)	**entgegen**	agree
voraus-	(‘upwards’)	nehmen	foretell, predict
vorbei-, vorüber-	(‘towards’)	**überein** kommen	pass
zurück-	(indicating	**voraus** sagen	drive back, return
zusammen-	agreement)	**vorbei** gehen	move together
	(‘in advance’)	**zurück** fahren	*fold up*
	(‘past’)	**zusammen**	
	(‘back’)	rücken	
	(‘together’ or	**zusammen** falten	
	‘up’)		

The compound directional adverbs in **hin-** and **her-**, see **7.2.4**, are also commonly used as separable prefixes, e.g. *hinausgehen*, *herunterkommen*. Other compound elements, e.g. **drauf-**, **hintan-**, **vorweg-**, **zuvor-** are used with one or two verbs only, e.g. *vorwegnehmen* ‘anticipate’.

20.6.3 Separable prefix or separate word?

In the spelling rules in force before 1996, some nouns, verbs and adjectives were treated as separable prefixes and written together with the verb according to the same rules as for separable prefixes, e.g. *achtgeben* ‘pay heed’ , *radfahren* ‘cycle’, *liebgewinnen* ‘grow fond of’, *offenlassen* ‘leave open’.

As there were no clear rules as to which combinations could be treated as separable verbs, there were many exceptions and anomalies, and the new spelling rules prescribe that most of these combinations should be spelled as separate words in all their forms, e.g. *Acht geben*, *Rad fahren*, *lieb gewinnen*, *offen lassen*.

The following rules now apply:

(a) Combinations of noun + verb are now normally spelled as separate words

Halt machen: ich mache Halt, sie machte Halt, sie haben Halt gemacht

Maß halten: ich halte Maß, sie hielt Maß, sie haben Maß gehalten

Ski laufen: ich laufe Ski, sie lief Ski, sie sind Ski gelaufen

An exception is made of the following nouns, which are taken to have lost their full meaning in combinations with a verb and are seen as separable prefixes:

heim-	*irre-*	*preis-*	*stand-*	*statt-*	*teil-*	*wett-*	*wunder-*
heimgehen	*go home*	standhalten	*stand firm*	wettmachen	*make up for*		
irreführen	*mislead*	stattfinden	*take place*	wundernehmen	*surprise*		
preisgeben	*expose*	teilnehmen	*participate*				

leidtun is now treated like this again, following the most recent revision of the reform, and forms which do not exist as separate words are also treated as separable prefixes, e.g. **fehlschlagen**, **feilbieten**, **kopfstehen**, **kundgeben**, **weismachen**.

(b) Combinations of adjective or adverb + verb are normally written together

aneinanderfügen	*join together*	kurztreten	*go easy*
anheimfallen	fall victim to	leichtmachen	make sth. easy
aufwärtsgehen	do better	nahelegen	suggest
durcheinanderbringen	muddle up	überhandnehmen	get out of hand
fernliegen	*be far from*	übrigbleiben	*be left over*

In particular adjectives and adverbs consisting of **a preposition and -einander** are always written together with the verb. However, if the first element is a phrase (or derives from a phrase, e.g. *instand setzen*), it is always written separately from the verb (see also **21.3.1**).

Similarly, adjectives and adverbs which cannot be used in the comparative in conjunction with the verb, or be modified by *sehr* or *ganz*, are seen to form fixed idiomatic combinations with the verb. They

are considered to be separable prefixes and always written together:

bereithalten	*have ready*	gutschreiben	*credit*
bloßstellen	show up	schwarzarbeiten	moonlight
fernsehen	watch TV	totschlagen	*kill*
festsetzen	*fix*		

One can, for instance say *ich sehe fern*, but it is not possible to say * *ich sehe ferner*, and *ich sehe sehr fern* can only have its literal meaning of 'I am looking a long way'.

However, if the adjective expresses a property which is the result of the action of the verb, the two parts may be written together **or** separately. The most frequent of these are:

kaltstellen/kalt stellen *exclude, put out of the way*

kaputtmachen/kaputt machen *break, smash*

kleinschneiden/klein schneiden *cut up small*

Some verbs look as if they have prefixes, but they are actually formed from compound nouns and the first element does not separate, e.g.:

frühstücken *breakfast*: ich frühstücke, ich habe gefrühstückt, etc.

Similarly: *handhaben* 'manipulate', *langweilen* 'bore', *liebkosen* 'caress', *wetteifern* 'compete'.

(c) Combinations of verb or participle + verb are generally written as separate words

gefangen nehmen	*take captive*	spazieren gehen	*go for a walk*
laufen lernen	*learn to walk*	verloren gehen	*be lost*

However, combinations with *bleiben* or *lassen*, and also the

combination *kennen lernen* may be written together, especially if the combination is felt to have a distinct meaning. This means that either possibility is allowed:

fallen lassen/fallenlassen *drop*

kennen lernen/kennenlernen *get to know*

stehen bleiben/stehenbleiben *stop*

(d) Combinations with the verb sein are always written as separate words

This applies even with forms which are normally taken as separable prefixes:

da sein	*be there*	los sein	*be up*	zufrieden sein	*be satisfied*
inne sein	*be conscious of*	vorbei sein	*be past*	zurück sein	*be back*

(e) Defective compound verbs are always written as a single word

These are verbs which have a special meaning and are only used in the form of the infinitive and/or the past participle. They are especially frequent in technical language.

(i) Some compounds only exist in the infinitive form:

brustschwimmen	*swim breast-stroke*	segelfliegen	*glide*
kettenrauchen	*chain-smoke*	wettlaufen	*race*

For instance, you can say *ich gehe morgen segelfliegen*, but not * *ich segelfliege*

(ii) Some compounds are only used in the infinitive and the past

participle:

seiltanzen *walk the tightrope* → uraufführen *perform for the first time*

With these, you can say, for example, *Das neue Stück wird morgen uraufgeführt*, but not * *Morgen uraufführt man das neue Stück.*

(iii) There may be uncertainty in the formation of the past participle of such verbs. With a number, the first element can be treated as if it were a separable prefix, and the prefix *ge-* of the participle inserted between this and the root of the verb, e.g.:

notlanden *make an emergency landing* → genotlandet *or* notgelandet

schutzimpfen *innoculate* → geschutzimpft *or* schutzgeimpft

The same applies to several recent verbs loaned from or modelled on English with prepositions or adverbs as their first element, e.g.:

doppelklicken → gedoppelklickt *or* doppelgeklickt

downloaden → gedownloadet *or* downgeloadet

outsourcen → outgesourct *or* geoutsourct

upgraden → geupgradet *or* upgegradet

If such verbs have - *ge-* inserted in the past participle, the *zu* of the infinitive can also be incorporated in the verb, e.g. *doppelzuklicken*, *outzusourcen.*

20.7 Variable verb prefixes

A small number of prefixes can form both separable and inseparable verbs. **If the verb is separable, the prefix is stressed, if it is**

inseparable, the prefix is unstressed.

20.7.1 *durch-*

durch- always expresses the idea of 'through', whether separable or inseparable.

(a) A few compounds with *durch-* are only inseparable

durch´denken *think through* durch´leben *experience* durch´löchern *make holes in*

Separable *´durchdenken* is also found with the identical meaning to *durch´denken*, but it is less common.

(b) Many compounds with *durch-* are only separable

´durchblicken *look through* ´durchführen *carry out*
´durchkommen *get through, succeed* ´durchrosten *rust through*
´durchfallen *fall through/fail* ´durchhalten *hold out, survive*
´durchkriechen *crawl through* ´durchsehen *look through*

(c) Some verbs form separable and inseparable compounds with *durch-*

The separable compounds always mean 'right the way through'. The inseparable verbs emphasize penetration without necessarily reaching the other side. However, the distinction may be fine, especially with verbs of motion. Compare:

Er **eilte** durch die Vorhalle **durch** *He hurried through the vestibule*

Er **durcheilte** die Vorhalle *He hurried across the vestibule*

Er **ritt** durch den Wald **durch** *He crossed the forest on horseback*

Er **durchritt** den Wald *He rode through the forest*

Similarly:

durchbrechen *break through*	durchlaufen *run through*
durchschauen *see through*	durchstoßen *break through*
durchdringen *penetrate*	durchreisen *travel through*
durchfahren *travel through*	durchwachen *stay awake*

However, the separable and inseparable meanings are quite distinct in the case of *durchsetzen*, as separable ´ *durchsetzen* means 'carry through', whilst inseparable *durch´setzen* means 'infiltrate'. The distinction is also clear with *durchkämmen* 'comb through' in that separable ´ *durchkämmen* is only used in a literal sense, of hair, whereas inseparable *durch ´ kämmen* has the figurative meaning of 'search thoroughly in'.

20.7.2 *hinter-*

hinter- normally forms inseparable compounds

hinter´gehen *deceive*	hinter´legen *deposit*
hinter´fragen *analyse*	hinter´treiben *foil, thwart*
hinter´lassen *leave, bequeathe*	

Separable compounds with *hinter-* are non-standard regionalisms, e.g. *'hinterbringen* ' take to the back', *'hintergehen* 'go to the back'.

20.7.3 *miss-*

miss- is generally inseparable. It has two main senses, i.e.:

(i) '**opposite**': missachten *despise, disdain* misstrauen *distrust*

(ii) **'badly'**, **'wrongly'**: missdeuten *misinterpret* misshandeln *ill-treat*

With a few verbs *miss-* can be treated as separable in the past participle and the infinitive with *zu*, e.g. *missgeachtet*, *misszuachten*, see **11.1.2b**. These forms are alternatives to the regular inseparable forms *missachtet*, *zu missachten* and are generally less frequent, with the exception of *missverstehen*, where the extended infinitive most commonly has the form *misszuverstehen*.

20.7.4 *ob-*

ob- is mainly inseparable. There are very few verbs with the prefix *ob-* in current use, e.g. **obliegen** 'to be incumbent', **obsiegen** 'to prevail', and they are limited to use in formal registers. They are most often inseparable, e.g.:

> Die Beweislast obliegt dem Ankläger *The burden of proof is on the prosecutor*

However, all can be used separably, e.g. *Das liegt dem Ankläger ob*, although this alternative is less frequent.

20.7.5 *über-*

(a) A few compounds with *über-* are only separable

They are all intransitive and have the literal meaning 'over', e.g.:

> ´überhängen *overhang* ´überkochen *boil over*
> ´überkippen *keel over*

(b) A large number of compounds with *über-* are only inseparable

They are all transitive and have a variety of meanings, i.e.:

(i) repetition: über´arbeiten *rework* über´prüfen *check*

(ii) more than enough: über´fordern *overtax* über´treiben *exaggerate*

(iii) failing to notice: über´hören *fail to hear* über´sehen *overlook*

(iv) 'over': über´denken *think over* über´fallen *attack*

(c) Many verbs form both separable and inseparable compounds with *über-*

The separable compounds are mostly intransitive. They all have the literal meaning 'over'. The inseparable verbs are mostly transitive, with a more figurative meaning often similar to those given under **(b)** above:

	separable	**inseparable**
überfahren	*cross over*	*run over*
überführen	transfer	convict
übergehen	turn into sth.	leave out
überlaufen	overflow; desert	overrun
überlegen	put sth. over sb./sth.	consider
übersetzen	ferry over	translate
überspringen	jump over	skip
übertreten	change over	infringe
überziehen	*put on*	*cover*

übersiedeln 'move (house)' can be used as a separable **or** inseparable verb with no distinction in meaning.

20.7.6 *um-*

(a) A large number of compounds in *um-* are only separable

Most express the idea of turning or changing a state:

´umblicken *look round*
´umbringen *kill*
´umdrehen *turn round*
´umfallen *fall over*
´umkommen *die, perish*
´umschalten *switch*
´umsteigen *change* (trains, etc.)

(b) Many compounds in *um-* are only inseparable

They all express encirclement or surrounding:

um´armen *embrace*
um´fassen *embrace, encircle*
um´geben *surround*
um´ringen *surround*
um´segeln *sail round, circumnavigate*
um´zingeln *surround, encircle*

(c) Many verbs form separable and inseparable compounds in *um-*

The difference in meaning corresponds to that given in **(a)** and **(b)** above:

	separable	**inseparable**
umbauen	*rebuild*	*enclose*
umbrechen	break up	set (i.e. type)
umfahren	run over, knock down	travel round
umgehen	circulate	avoid
umreißen		

umschreiben	tear down	outline
umstellen	rewrite	paraphrase
	rearrange	*surround*

20.7.7 *unter-*

(a) A large number of compounds in *unter-* are only separable

They generally have a literal meaning, i.e. 'under', e.g.:

´unterbringen *accommodate* ´unterkommen *find accommodation*

´untergehen *sink, decline* ´untersetzen *put underneath*

(b) Many compounds in *unter-* are only inseparable

They have a variety of meanings, i.e.:

(i) less than enough:

unter´bieten *undercut* unter´schreiten *fall short*

unter´schätzen *underestimate* unter´steuern *understeer*

(ii) 'under':

unter´drücken *suppress, oppress* unter´schreiben *sign*

unter´liegen *be defeated* unter´stützen *support*

(iii) other, miscellaneous meanings:

unter´bleiben *cease* unter´richten *teach*

unter´brechen *interrupt* unter´sagen *forbid, prohibit*

unter´lassen *refrain from* unter´laufen *occur*

unter´suchen *investigate*

(c) Many verbs form separable and inseparable compounds with *unter-*

The separable verbs are mostly intransitive and have the meaning 'under'. The inseparable compounds are all transitive, and most have a more figurative meaning:

	separable	**inseparable**
unterbinden	*tie underneath*	*prevent*
untergraben	dig in	undermine
unterhalten	hold underneath	entertain
unterlegen	put underneath	underlay
unterschieben	foist	insinuate
unterschlagen	*cross* (e.g. legs)	embezzle
unterstellen	*keep, store*	assume
unterziehen	*put on underneath*	*undergo*

20.7.8 *voll-*

(a) Many verbs form compounds with *voll-* which are only separable

They all have the meaning 'full', e.g.:

´vollbekommen *manage to fill* ´vollschreiben *fill with writing*

´vollstopfen *cram full* ´volltanken *fill up* (car with fuel)

(b) A few compounds with *voll-* are only inseparable

Most of these are words used in formal registers with the meaning ‘complete’, ‘finish’ or ‘accomplish’:

voll′bringen *achieve, accomplish* voll′strecken *execute, carry out*

voll′enden *complete* voll′ziehen *execute, carry out*

voll′führen *execute, perform*

20.7.9 *wider-*

wider- usually forms inseparable verbs

wider′legen *refute* wider′stehen *resist*

Only two verbs in *wider-* are separable:

′widerhallen *echo, reverberate* ′widerspiegeln *reflect*

widerspiegeln is sometimes used inseparably, but this is less frequent and only in the present tense.

20.7.10 wieder-

wieder- usually forms separable verbs

′wiederkehren *return* ′wiedersehen *see again*

Only **one** verb prefixed with *wieder-* is inseparable: *wieder ′ holen* ‘repeat’.

20.8 Verb formation by means other than prefixes

By far the most productive means of creating verbs is by means of prefixes but some other patterns are frequent or productive.

20.8.1 Many verbs are formed simply from nouns or adjectives

The simplest way to convert a noun or an adjective to a verb is to **add verbal endings** (i.e. those indicating person, number, tense, etc.) **to the root of the noun or the adjective**.

These have a variety of meanings, and some add *Umlaut*, especially the verbs from adjectives which have the sense of giving something a particular quality:

der Dampf	¨dampfen *steam*	falsch	¨fälschen *forge, falsify*
der Donner	¨donnern *thunder*	krank	¨kranken *suffer*
die Feder	¨federn *be springy*	kurz	¨kürzen *shorten*
der Fluch	¨fluchen *curse*	leer	¨leeren *empty*
das Fohlen	¨fohlen *foal (of mare)*	reif	¨reifen *ripen*
der Hammer	¨hämmern *hammer*	scharf	¨schärfen *sharpen*
die Kachel	¨kacheln *tile*	schwarz	¨schwärzen *blacken*
der Kellner	¨kellnern *work as a waiter*	trocken	¨trocknen *dry*
der Löffel	¨löffeln *spoon*	wach	¨wachen *be awake*
der Splitter	¨splittern *splinter*	welk	¨welken *wilt*

This means of verb formation is also widely employed with new roots from English, e.g. *bloggen* (from *das Blog*), *jetten* (from *der Jet*), *simsen* (from *die SMS = 'short message service'*), *tweeten* (from *die Tweet*).

20.8.2 Other ways of forming verbs

(a) Weak verbs formed from strong verbs with vowel change

These verbs typically mean 'cause to do sth.' This pattern is no longer productive, but its results are still common. In general, a transitive weak verb has been formed from an intransitive strong verb:

ertrinken *drown* (intr.)	¨ertränken *drown* (trans.)	sitzen *sit*	¨setzen *set*
fallen *fall*	¨fällen *fell*	springen *jump*	¨sprengen *blow up*

(b) Verbs in *-eln* express a weaker form of the action

They usually have *Umlaut*:

husten *cough*	¨hüsteln *cough slightly*	lachen *laugh*	¨lächeln *smile*
krank *ill, sick*	¨kränkeln *be sickly*	streichen *stroke*	¨streicheln *caress*

Some such verbs have a pejorative sense, e.g. tanzen *dance* ¨ tänzeln *prance*.

This formation is productive and can be based on nouns or adjectives as well as on other verbs:

fromm *pious*	¨frömmeln *affect piety*
der Schwabe *Swabian*	¨schwäbeln *speak with a Swabian accent*

(c) The suffix *-ieren* is mainly used to form verbs from foreign words

The source of most verbs in *-ieren* (and its derivatives *-isieren* and *-ifizieren*) is French or Latin. Some have entered German directly from French verbs in *-er*, e.g. ***arranger*** → **arrangieren**.

Others have been formed in German from the roots of words taken into German from these or other languages, e.g. *das Tabu* → **tabuisieren**.

Only a very few are formed from German roots: *der Buchstabe* → **buchstabieren** is the most obvious exception.

Spelling, pronunciation and punctuation

German spelling and punctuation are relatively consistent, but some usages and rules are quite different to those for English, and this chapter gives information on these. The rulings given are those accepted as authoritative in all the countries where German is an official language.

Uniform official spelling rules for the German-speaking countries were first established in 1901/02. Towards the end of the twentieth century it was felt that the rulings made then and subsequently had left some unnecessary inconsistencies and anomalies which needed to be eliminated. For this reason, the countries involved agreed in 1994/95 on a set of reforms which began to be introduced in primary schools in 1996. For a transitional period the old and the new spellings were permitted, but from 2006 only the new spellings have been regarded as correct for official purposes, in particular in schools and other state institutions.

Although the changes were not far-reaching, this spelling reform gave rise to considerable controversy, and numerous attempts were made, even through the law-courts, to reverse the decision to introduce it. Although these were ultimately unsuccessful, and the waves of protest have subsided to a certain extent, they resulted in a succession of (relatively minor) changes to the reforms, which resulted in a final version of the new rules being issued in March 2006, with minor modifications in 2011 in respect of the spelling of some foreign words. By 2016 all but a very few newspapers and books were using the

reformed spellings (or a version of them), and although some well-known authors insisted initially on keeping to the traditional rules, their recent books have appeared with the new spellings.

All the same, even twenty years after the original reform proposals, opinion polls have consistently shown a majority opposing them, and many people who finished their schooling before the reform stick to the old rules for private use – or a mixture of old and new, because the successive modifications to the reform have created a widespread feeling of uncertainty about what is actually correct.

In this way, learners are likely to be confronted with both sets of spellings for some time, but they are recommended to adhere strictly to the new rules, as they are the only ones regarded as officially correct. Full details of them, together with a comprehensive wordlist, can be downloaded from the website of the *Institut für Deutsche Sprache* (www1.ids-mannheim.de/). **The most recent version of the reformed spelling has been applied consistently in this book, and the information given in this chapter relates exclusively to it**. In particular, we deal with:

- **spelling** and **pronunciation** (section **21.1**)
- the use of **capital letters** (section **21.2**)
- whether to write **one word or two** (section **21.3**)
- other **miscellaneous points** of spelling (section **21.4**)
- the use of the **comma** (section **21.5**)
- the use of other **punctuation marks** (section **21.6**)

21.1 Spelling and pronunciation

The relationship between letters and the sounds they represent is more straightforward in German than in English and, in general, each sound

of German corresponds to a single letter or group of letters. However, there are a few exceptions to this, and the main aim of this section is to give information on these cases.

Where necessary, the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) are used to make clear precisely what sounds are involved and, following normal conventions in phonetics, they are given in square brackets. A table of the IPA symbols can be found on **page xxi**.

The accepted 'standard' pronunciation of German is based on a set of norms originally established by a commission which met in 1898 to establish the best pronunciation for use on the stage, and is thus called *Bühnenaussprache*. This is now usually referred to as *Hochlautung*, or often simply as *Hochdeutsch* (although this term strictly speaking covers standard grammar and vocabulary as well as pronunciation). This was originally a set of rather formal norms, but a modified form of them is now widely accepted as an ideal to aim for, especially for foreign learners, and the information in this section is based on this.

Although these norms are predominantly North German, they are generally regarded as reflecting the 'best' usage, and they are acceptable everywhere. There is, of course, much variation in actual usage within Germany and (especially) the other German-speaking countries, but a book such as this can only give information on the most important instances of such variation.

21.1.1 *b, d* and *g*

(a) *b, d* and *g* are pronounced as [p], [t] and [k] at the end of a word or syllable, or before a consonant

Sie**b**	[zi:p]	a**b**fahren	[apfa:ʁən]	ha**b**t	[hapt]
Ra**d**	[ʁa:t]	kun**d**geben	[kʊntge:bən]	sa**g**t	[za:kt]
Zu**g**	[tsu:k]	wegfahren	[vɛkfa:ʁən]		

Otherwise, i.e. at the beginning of a word or between vowels, *b*, *d* and *g* are pronounced [b], [d] and [g], as in English.

(b) There are two exceptions to this rule in respect of *g*

(i) In **the ending - *ig***, *g* is pronounced as *ch*, i.e. [ç]

Kön**ig**	[kø:nɪç]	sand**ig**	[zandɪç]	Auß**ig**	[aʊsɪç]

(ii) In **North and Central Germany**, *g* is often pronounced like *ch* (i.e. as [ç] or [x]) in all other cases when it occurs at the end of a word or syllable, or before a consonant

Zu**g**	[tsu:x]	weg**f**ahren	[vɛçfa:ʁən]	sa**gt**	[za:xt]

This pronunciation is not considered standard, but it is in practice almost universal usage by a majority of speakers across the northern two-thirds of Germany, i.e. north of the river Main.

21.1.2 *ch*

(a) The pronunciation of *ch* differs depending on the preceding sound

(i) After low and back vowels, i.e. ***a***, ***o*** and ***u***, ***ch* is pronounced [x]**:

Ba**ch**	[bax]	Lo**ch**	[lɔx]	Bu**ch**	[bu:x]	Bau**ch**	[baʊx]

(ii) After front vowels, i.e. ***i***, ***e***, ***ü*** and ***ö***, after ***l*** and ***r***, and in the suffix -*che* ***n***, ***ch* is pronounced [ç]**:

mi**ch**	[mɪç]	e**ch**t	[ɛçt]	Bü**ch**er	[by:çɐ]	Lö**ch**er	[lœçɐ]
Mil**ch**	[mɪlç]	Kir**ch**e	[kɪʁçə]	Veil**ch**en	[faɪlçən]		

(b) The pronunciation of *ch* at the beginning of a word

(i) In most words it is always pronounced [k], e.g.:

Chamäleon, Chaos, Charakter, Chlor, Cholera, Chor, Christ, Chrom, Chronik

(ii) In words originally from French it is pronounced [ʃ], e.g.:

Champagner, Chance, Charme, Chauffeur, Chef, Chirurg

(iii) In a few words it is pronounced [ç] in the North (i.e. north of the Main), but in the South (including Austria and Switzerland) it is pronounced [k]. The most frequent of these words are:

Charisma, Chemie, Chile, China

Either pronunciation is accepted as standard.

(c) The combination *chs* is pronounced [ks]

wa**chs**en	[vaksən]	Fu**chs**	[fʊks]	A**chse**	[aksə]

21.1.3 Other consonants

(a) *s* is pronounced [s] except in the following contexts

(i) At the beginning of a word before a vowel, and between vowels, *s* is pronounced [z]:

suchen	[zu:xən]	sandig	[zandɪç]	lesen	[le:zən]

(ii) At the **beginning of a word before *p* and *t***, ***s*** is pronounced [ʃ]:

spielen	[ʃpi:lən]	Straße	[ʃtra:sə]

(b) *ng* is always pronounced [ŋ]

It is never pronounced [ŋ g] as in some English words. Compare, for example, the difference between English *finger* [fɪ ŋ gə] and German *Finger* [fɪ ŋ ɐ].

21.1.4 Long and short vowels

English-speaking learners need to pay attention to the distinction between long and short vowels in German, as there are significant differences from English. In particular, **German long vowels are consistently long**.

The problem is not helped by the fact that this distinction is the area where German spelling is least systematic, and the difference between long and short vowels is not always clearly shown. The main rules (and exceptions) are as follows:

(a) Vowels before double consonants are always short

This rule applies whether the double consonant is in the middle or at the end of the word.

bitte	[bɪtə]	fallen	[falən]	Klasse	[klasə]	Acker	[akɐ]
Butt	[bʊt]	Schiff	[ʃɪf]	knapp	[knap]	Pack	[pak]

k is never doubled in spelling, and *ck* is used instead.

(b) Vowels before single consonants are usually long

This rule applies whether the consonant is in the middle or at the end of the word.

geben	[geːbən]	lösen	[løːzən]	Hefe	[heːfə]	üben	[yːbən]
gab	[gaːp]	Tag	[taːk]	Chor	[koːɐ]	Mut	[muːt]

Note that ***ß* counts as a single consonant**, and this is the main reason why it is used in contrast to *ss* (see **21.4.1**). Compare:

Fuß	[fuːs]	Fluss	[flʊs]	Maße	[maːsə]	Masse	[masə]

Some loan-words from English are an exception to this rule, as they end in a single consonant but have a short vowel, e.g. *Bus* [bʊs], *Jet* [dʒet]. When such words have an ending, the consonant is doubled: *Busse*, *jetten*.

(c) Vowels before clusters of more than one consonant are usually short

Gang	[gaŋ]	Pflicht	[pflɪçt]	Mast	[mast]	Werk	[vɛʁk]
sitzen	[zɪtsən]	Sünde	[zʏndə]	schuften	[ʃʊftən]	Wespe	[vɛspə]

However, this rule is not consistent, and there are several common exceptions, e.g.:

Art	[aːʁt]	atmen	[aːtmən]	Geburt	[gəbuːʁt]	Jagd	[jaːkt]
Krebs	[kʁeːps]	Mond	[moːnt]	regnen	[ʁeːgnən]	trösten	[tʁøːstən]

Inflected forms of words or derived words keep a long vowel, even if the ending results in a consonant cluster:

lösen [løːzən]	¯löste [løːstə]	Tag [taːk]	¯Tags [taːks]
Hof [hoːf]	¯höflich [høːflɪç]	sagen [zaːgən]	¯sagbar [zaːkbaːʁ]

(d) Vowels before *ch* may be long or short

In practice, each word needs to be remembered separately:

Loch	[lɔx]	Hochzeit	[hɔxtsaɪt]	brechen	[brɛçən]
hoch	[hoːx]	fluchen	[fluːxən]	brach	[braːx]

(e) Other ways of marking long vowels

(i) Especially before *m*, *n*, *l* and *r*, a long vowel can be shown by **the silent letter *h***:

lahm	[laːm]	Bühne	[byːnə]	Höhle	[høːlə]	fahren	[faːʁən]

(ii) In a few words, a long vowel is shown by doubling the vowel letter:

Schnee	[ʃneː]	Saal	[zaːl]	Heer	[heːʁ]	Moos	[moːs]

(iii) Long [iː] is usually spelled *ie*, e.g. *Lied* [liː t], *Sieg* [ziː k], *Miene* [miː nə]

(iv) A single vowel at the end of a word is long, e.g. *du* [duː], *wo* [voː]

21.1.5 The vowel *ä*

Short *ä* is always pronounced [ɛ], i.e. identically to *e*, e.g. *Kräfte* [k ʁɛ ftə], *Gäste* [gestə]. Standard pronunciation prescribes that long *ä* should be pronounced [ɛː], e.g.:

wäre	[vɛːʁə]	gäbe	[gɛːbə]	Bär	[bɛːʁ]	Väter	[vɛːtɐ]

However, this ruling is widely ignored, especially in North Germany, and many people usually pronounce long *ä* and long *e* identically, as [eː], e.g. *wäre* [veːʁ ə], *gäbe* [geː bə], etc. Indeed, the pronunciation [ɛː] can sound affected. In practice it is most often used, if at all, in subjunctive forms like *gäbe*, in order to make the distinction from the indicative *gebe* clear.

21.1.6 Word stress

Like in English, one syllable in all German words of more than one

syllable is pronounced with rather more force than the others. **This syllable is said to be stressed**. However, there is no absolute rule about **which** syllable in a German word is stressed, although there are certain regularities.

(a) In most native German words the stress falls on the first syllable of the word

'**Mo**nat '**Bru**der '**ge**stern '**Glau**be '**Ar**beit '**E**lend '**Se**gel

There are very few exceptions to this rule, the most common are:

Fo'**re**lle Ho'**lun**der Hor'**ni**sse Kar'**to**ffel le'**ben**dig Wach'**ol**der

(b) The position of the stress remains constant in native German words

i.e. it falls on the same syllable irrespective of any endings which might be added:

´ **Mo** nate	´ **glau** ben	´ **glaub** haft	´ **Glaub** haftigkeit	´ **glaub** würdig

The only exception is that **the suffix - *ei* is always stressed**: *Bäcker´* ***ei***, *Bücher´* **ei**

(c) Stress in words with prefixes

(i) Some prefixes are always unstressed, whether on nouns, adjectives or verbs, i.e. *be* -, *emp* -, *ent* -, *er* -, *ge* -, *ver* -, *zer* -. With verbs these prefixes are inseparable, see **20.5**.

emp'**fang**en Emp'**fang** emp'**fäng**lich Ge'**schich**te ver'**steh**en Ver'**stand**

(ii) **Most other prefixes are stressed**. With verbs, these prefixes are separable, see **20.6**.

'**ab**fahren '**Ab**fahrt '**ab**hängig '**ein**fallen '**Ein**fall '**ein**fältig

It has recently been reported that some adverbs of this type are starting to be pronounced with stress on the second syllable, in particular ***an ´ geblich***, ***an ´ scheinend*** and ***aus ´ führlich***, possibly because their meaning is no longer seen as linked to the verbs *angeben*, etc. It is not clear how widespread this change of stress is, whether any other words are affected, or whether it is considered non-standard.

(iii) **A few verb prefixes** can be stressed or unstressed, usually with a difference in meaning, see **20.7**. Nouns derived from these verbs normally keep the same stress as the original verb:

über´ **fah** ren *run over*	´ **üb** erfahren *cross over*	´ **Üb** erfahrt *crossing*
über´ **le** gen *consider*	´ **üb** erlegen *put/lay over*	Über´ **le** gung *consideration*

(iv) **The prefix *miss*** - is variable with verbs, see **20.7.3**, but with nouns in *miss-* the prefix is always stressed:

miss´ **brau** chen *misuse* ´ **Miss** brauch *misuse*

(v) **The prefix *un*** - is usually stressed in nouns and adjectives if the form with *un-* is a straightforward negative of the form without *un-*, see **20.2.2j** and **20.3.2b**:

schuldig *guilty*	´ **un** schuldig *innocent*	Wetter *weather*	´ **Un** wetter *bad weather*

However, ***un*** - **with some adjectives is not stressed**. This is especially (but not universally) the case if there is no corresponding adjective without *un-*, or if there is some change of meaning other than simple

negation, e.g.:

unauf˝ **hör** lich *incessant* uner´ **hört** *outrageous* un´ **mög** lich *impossible*

In addition, *un-* tends not to be stressed in adjectives with the prefix *un-* and the suffix - *bar*, or with the suffix - *lich* where it corresponds to English - *able* or - *ible*, cf. **20.3.1**.

unbe´ **wohn** bar *uninhabitable* unent˝ **behr** lich *indispensable*

(d) Stress in words of foreign origin

German words of French, Greek or Latin origin often have a different stress pattern to native words.

(i) They are characteristically stressed on the **final syllable**, e.g.:

ak´ **tiv**	feu´ **dal**	Phy´ **sik**	Reper´ **toire**
Al´ **tar**	Konso´ **nant**	Poli´ **zist**	Ro´ **man**
Biolo´ **gie**	Kon´ **trast**	Reforma´ **tion**	Stu´ **dent**
Ele´ **ganz**	Na´ **tur**	Re´ **gime**	Universi´ **tät**

Exceptionally, a **few words in** - *ik* are stressed on the penultimate syllable, e.g. *´* ***Go*** *thik, Gram´* ***ma*** *tik, ´* ***Lo*** *gik*. When - ***er*** **is suffixed** to words in stressed - *ik*, the stress shifts back a syllable, e.g. *´* ***Phys*** *iker, Po´* ***lit*** *iker*.

(ii) Foreign words with some endings are characteristically **stressed on the penultimate syllable**. Many of these have the vowel [ə] in the final syllable, or the final syllable is - *as*, - *is*, -*o s*, - *us* or - *um*:

´ **Al** bum	Fa´ **mi** lie	Pas´ **sa** ge	Sozia´ **lis** mus
´ **At** las	´ **Fis** kus	Prog´ **no** se	Sozio´ **lo** ge
Brí´ **ga** de	´ **Kos** mos	ren´ **ta** bel	Ta´ **be** lle

Chi´ **ne** se La´ **ven** del Schoko´ **la** de ´ **Zen** trum

Note the different treatment of words spelled with final *-ie*. If it is pronounced [i:] it is stressed, e.g. *Biolo´* ***gie***, but if it is pronounced [jə] the preceding syllable is stressed, e.g. *Fa´* ***mi*** *lie*.

(iii) Words with the suffixes *- on* and *-* ***or*** are usually stressed on the preceding syllable, e.g.:

'**A**utor '**Dä**mon Di'**rek**tor '**D**oktor Pro'**fes**sor '**Trak**tor

In these words the stress shifts when the plural ending *-en* is added:

Au'**to**ren Dä'**mo**nen Direk'**to**ren Dok'**to**ren Profes'**so**ren Trak'**to**ren

Motor can be stressed on either syllable, i.e. *´* ***Mo*** *tor* or *Mo´* ***tor***, but the plural is always *Mo´* ***tor*** *en*.

(iv) **Adjectives in** *-* ***isch*** from foreign roots (see **20.3.1e**) are stressed on the preceding syllable:

bio´ **lo** gisch ´ **mo** disch musi´ **ka** lisch no´ **ma** disch

(v) Although stress on the final or penultimate syllable is generally characteristic of foreign words, there are many which are stressed on the first syllable, e.g.:

´ **Al** batros ´ **Al** gebra ´ **Kä** nguru ´ **Ko** rridor ´ **Pub** likum

21.2 Capital letters

The basic rules are that **initial capital letters are used**:

• for the **first word in a sentence** (or a line of poetry)

• for **all nouns**, e.g. *der Sack*, *die Schwierigkeit*, *das Bürgertum*, *die Pfirsiche*

• for the **'polite' second person pronoun** *Sie* and all its forms, e.g. *Ihnen*, *Ihr*, etc., see **3.3**

• for **proper names**, e.g. *Frankfurt*, *Deutschland*, *das Schwarze Meer*

All other words begin with a small letter.

Some further explanation is necessary with some of these basic rules, as detailed in the remainder of this section.

21.2.1 Capital letters with nouns and proper names

(a) Other parts of speech used as nouns are written with an initial capital letter

beim Lesen	das Für und	das Ich	das Entweder-
eine Drei	Wider	der Vorsitzende	Oder
alles Gute	ein Drittel		Bekanntes
	nichts Schlechtes		

Some exceptions to this rule under the previous spelling rules have been partly eliminated, and all nouns are now spelled with an initial capital letter, e.g.:

im Allgemeinen *in general* im Großen und Ganzen *in general*

alles Mögliche *everything possible* aufs Neue *afresh*

However, small letters can still be used in some idiomatic expressions which do not include distinct nouns. In these cases, **adjectives without an ending are always spelled with a small letter**:

durch dick und dünn *through thick and thin* von nah und fern

from near and far

gegen bar *for cash* über kurz oder lang *sooner or later*

schwarz auf weiß *in black and white* von klein auf *from childhood*

However, **declined adjectives can be spelled with a small or a capital letter**:

binnen kurzem/Kurzem *in a short time* von weitem/Weitem *from afar*

seit langem/Langem *for a long time* bei weitem/Weitem *by far*

ohne weiteres/Weiteres *without thinking*

(b) Adjectives are not spelled with a capital letter if a noun before or after is understood

Das rote Kleid hat mir nicht gepasst, ich musste das **blaue** nehmen

Es ist wohl das **schnellste** von diesen drei Autos

(c) The determiners *ander, beide* and *ein* have small letters in most contexts

This applies even in contexts where it would appear that they are being used as nouns, e.g.:

etwas **anderes** diese **beiden** das **eine** und das **andere**

However, *ander* can be used with an initial capital letter if it refers to something or somebody specific:

das Leben der **Anderen** *the life of others*

(d) Usage with geographical and other proper names

(i) Adjectives forming part of geographical or other names referring to something or somebody unique have an initial capital letter:

das Schwarze Meer *the Black Sea* Karl der Erste *Charles the First*

das Neue Testament *the New Testament* die Olympischen Spiele *the Olympic Games*

das Auswärtige Amt *the Foreign Office* der Eiserne Vorhang *the Iron Curtain*

die Französische Revolution *the French Revolution*

However, the following, and others like them, are not names of unique things, and they are spelled with a small letter:

die goldene Hochzeit *golden wedding* der schwarze Markt *the black market*

(ii) Indeclinable adjectives in *-er* from the names of towns and countries have an initial capital:

der Kölner Dom die Berliner Straßen das Wiener Rathaus

(iii) Adjectives formed from proper names with the suffix *-isch* (or *-sch*) normally have a small letter:

die goetheschen Gedichte das elisabethanische Drama das ohmsche Gesetz

These adjectives can be used with an apostrophe after the name to emphasize the person involved, in which case they are written with an initial capital, e.g. *die Grimm'schen Märchen.*

(e) Usage with *deutsch* and other adjectives of nationality

(i) Adjectives of nationality are written with a capital letter when used as a noun to refer to the language or the school subject (see **6.4.6a**):

Er kann kein Wort Deutsch	Das ist (kein) gutes Deutsch	auf Deutsch *in German*
Wir haben Deutsch in der Schule	Ich habe eine Drei in Deutsch	

Sie spricht, kann, lernt, liest (kein, gut) Deutsch, Russisch, Englisch

Das Buch ist in Deutsch und Englisch erschienen

As an adjective used as a noun *der/die Deutsche* 'German' is also always spelled with a capital letter.

(ii) When used as adjectives they have a small letter:

das deutsche Volk	ein deutsches Lied	die deutsche Bundesrepublik
italienische Weine	ein amerikanisches Schiff	dieser französische Käse

This runs counter to English usage, which requires a capital letter ('the German people', 'Italian wines', etc.). Only in names is a capital used in German, e.g. *die Österreichischen Bundesbahnen.*

(iii) They have a small letter when used as the equivalent of an adverb:

Der Minister hat mit ihr deutsch gesprochen

Redet sie jetzt deutsch oder niederländisch?

(f) Capital and small letters with superlatives

(i) Superlatives with *am* (see **6.5.3a**) are spelled with a small letter:

am besten, am schönsten

(ii) Superlative forms used with the definite article are written with a capital letter, e.g.:

Es ist das Beste, wenn wir ihr alles sagen.

(iii) Superlatives with the preposition *aufs* (see **7.7.2a**) can be written with a capital or a small letter:

aufs Heftigste/heftigste

(g) Possessive pronouns with the form of an adjective after a definite article

(see **5.2.1d**). These can be spelled with a small or a capital initial letter, e.g.:

der meine/Meine *mine*, der deine/Deine *yours*, der uns(e)re/Uns(e)re *ours*

der meinige/Meinige *mine*, der deinige/Deinige *yours*, der uns(e)rige/Uns(e)rige *ours*

21.2.2 Nouns used as other parts of speech

These are written with a small letter, in particular:

(i) nouns **used as prepositions**, see **18.4**, e.g.:

angesichts, kraft, mittels, statt, trotz

(ii) nouns used as adverbs, e.g.:

abends, anfangs, kreuz und quer, mitten, morgens, rechtens, rings, sonntags, teils, willens

Capital letters are used for words denoting a part of the day used in conjunction with *heute*, *gestern* and *morgen*: *gestern Abend*, *heute Mittag*, etc. (see **7.3.2**).

(iii) nouns used in **indefinite expressions of number**, e.g.:

ein bisschen *a little* ein paar *a few* (see **5.5.6**)

(iv) some **nouns used as adjectives** with the verbs *sein*, *bleiben* and *werden*, i.e.: *Angst*, *Bange*, *Gram*, *Leid*, *Pleite, Schade* and *Schuld*:

Mir ist/wird **angst** *I am/am becoming afraid*

Er blieb ihr **gram** *He bore her ill-will*

Die Firma ist **pleite** *The firm is bankrupt*

Es ist **schade** *It's a pity*

Sie war **schuld** daran *It was her fault*

With other verbs, these words have an initial capital letter, e.g. *Ich habe Angst.*

(v) Nouns which have become idiomatic separable prefixes are spelled with a small letter, see **20.6.3**, e.g. *stattfinden*, *teilnehmen*.

21.2.3 Pronouns and related forms

All forms of the 'polite' second person pronoun ***Sie*** are spelled with a capital letter, see **Table 3.1**, e.g. *Sie*, *Ihnen*, *Ihre Frau*, etc.

The other second person pronouns ***du***, ***ihr*** and their forms may be spelled with small initial letters or capitals in letter-writing, e.g. *Ich danke dir/Dir recht herzlich für deinen/Deinen Brief.*

No other pronouns have initial capital letters (except when they begin a sentence).

21.3 One word or two?

The general rule is that **compounds are written as a single word if they are felt to be a single concept**. On the other hand, where the individual words are still felt to retain full meaning, they are written separately. The word stress often gives a clue to this, as a true compound only has one main stress, whereas separate words are still stressed independently. Compare:

´gut ´schreiben *write well* ´gutschreiben *credit*

´so ´weit *so far* so´weit *on the whole*

This rule has always given rise to uncertainties in borderline cases. Some of these were eliminated in the spelling reform, but others emerged, and after subsequent revisions the 'old' and 'new' spellings are permitted in a number of cases.

The main principles are explained with examples in this section, except that the spelling of separable and compound verbs, e.g. *Rad fahren*, *kundgeben* is treated in section **20.6.3**.

21.3.1 Combinations of preposition + noun

These have the function of adverbs or prepositions and they are written separately if the individual words are still felt to retain independent meanings:

mit Bezug auf, unter Bezug auf	zu Ende gehen	in/außer Kraft treten, sein

On the other hand, such adverbs or prepositions are written as single words if they are considered to be single entities, in particular:

anhand infolge vonnöten vorderhand zurzeit

beiseite inmitten vonstatten zuhanden zuzeiten

Alternative forms are permitted in some set phrases where it is debatable whether the words involved retain their separate meanings or not:

außerstand/außer Stand setzen, sein

imstande/im Stande sein

infrage/in Frage stellen

instand/in Stand setzen

nachhause/nach Hause gehen

zugrunde/zu Grunde gehen

zuhause/zu Hause sein

zuleide/zu Leide tun

zumute/zu Mute sein

zurande/zu Rande kommen

zuschanden/zu Schanden machen, werden

sich etwas zuschulden/zu Schulden kommen lassen

zustande/zu Stande bringen

zutage/zu Tage bringen, fördern

zuwege/zu Wege bringen

Some prepositions from complex phrases with a noun also have alternative spellings:

aufgrund/auf Grund zugunsten/zu Gunsten mithilfe/mit Hilfe anstelle/an Stelle

21.3.2 Nouns or adverbs with a participle or an adjective

Compounds which involve an underlying phrase are written together.

das bahnbrechende Werk (from *sich eine Bahn brechend*)	*the pioneering work*
der angsterfüllte alte Mann (from *von Angst erfüllt*)	the terrified old man
ein himmelschreiendes Unrecht (from *zum Himmel schreiend*)	an outrageous injustice
die staubbedeckten Bücher (from *mit Staub bedeckt*)	*the books covered with dust*

Other combinations of an adjective with a participle can always be written as separate words:

ein Aufsehen erregendes Ereignis die Eisen verarbeitende Industrie

However, it is permissible to write the words together if they are felt to express a single idea, e.g.:

eine allein erziehende/alleinerziehende Mutter

ein klein geschnittenes/kleingeschnittenes Radieschen

selbst gebackene/selbstgebackene Kekse

If the combination is qualified by an adverb of degree (see **7.5**), and the qualification relates to the whole combination, then it is written together, e.g.:

eine äußerst kraftraubende Trainingsmethode

21.3.3 Compound adverbs with *so-*, *wie-* and *wo-*

Note the difference between the following pairs (see **17.3.6** for details

on the conjunctions in *so*-):

sobald *as soon as* so bald *so soon*

solange *as long as* so lange *so long*

sooft *as often as* so oft *so often*

wieweit? *to what extent?* wie weit? *how far, what distance?*

woanders *elsewhere* (see **7.1.5d**) wo anders? *where else?*

womöglich *possibly* wo möglich *if possible*

so dass 'so that', see **17.5.2**, may alternatively be spelled *sodass*.

Most combinations with *viel* and *wenig* are spelled as separate words, e.g. *so viel*, *wie viel*, *zu wenig*, see **5.5.25e**, but when used as a conjunction in the meaning 'as far as' *soviel* is written as a single word, see **17.7d**.

21.4 Other points of spelling

21.4.1 *-ss* or *-ß*?

The distinction between *ss* and *ß* (called *eszett* in North Germany and *scharfes s* in South Germany and Austria) is universally observed in Germany and Austria. In Switzerland, though, no distinction is made and *ss* is used in all cases. Foreign learners are recommended to follow the majority practice.

(a) *-ss* is used if the preceding vowel is short

da **ss**, der Flu **ss**, die Flü **ss** e, gewi **ss**, la **ss** en, er lä **ss** t,

mü **ss** en, es mu **ss**, wi **ss** en, ich wu **ss** te, das Wa **ss** er

(b) -*ß* is used if the preceding vowel is long or a diphthong

bei **ß** en, die Bu **ß** e, der Fu **ß**, die Fü **ß** e, gro **ß**, der Gru **ß**, der Ma **ß**, die Ma **ß** e, die Stra **ß** e

The letter *ß* now fits consistently with the rule in German which stipulates that long vowels are followed by a single consonant in the spelling.

Some family names are always spelled with a final -*ss*, but this is very much a matter of individual family tradition e.g.:

Günther Gra **ss**, Theodor Heu **ss**, Richard Strau **ss** (but: Johann Strau **ß**), Carl Zei **ss**

ß was originally only a small letter, but its use as a capital is now permitted, e.g. *BONNER STRAßE*. However, many people still always write -*SS*- in capitals: *STRASSE*.

21.4.2 The omission of letters: special cases

(a) The plural of nouns in -*ee* and -*ie*

These nouns do not add an extra - *e* **in the spelling of the plural**, even if the plural ending is pronounced as a distinct syllable, e.g.:

der See, die Seen [ze: ən] das Knie, die Knie [kni: ə]

die Industrie, die Industrien [ɪndʊstri: ən]

Similarly in verb forms, see **10.2.1d**:

knien [kni: ən] *kneel* wir schrien [ʃ ri: ən] *we cried*

(b) Double vowels are simplified under *Umlaut*

(i) **in plurals** (see **1.2.1a**): der Saal *room* – die **Säle**

(ii) **in diminutives** (see **20.2.1a**): das Paar *pair* – das **Pär** chen

(c) Letters are not omitted in compounds

The former rule that sequences of three letters should be simplified no longer applies. Thus forms like the following are now standard:

Brennnessel *stinging nettle* Schifffahrt *travel by ship*

Schlussszene *closing scene* Schneeeule *snowy owl*

21.5 Commas

Unlike English, the comma in German is used to mark off grammatical units, **not** to signal a pause when speaking. The rules for using commas are fixed and were modified with spellings in the reforms of 1996. Germans adhere to these rules quite strictly (they are taught systematically in schools), and deviations from them are considered to be as serious as spelling mistakes.

This principle that commas are used to mark off larger syntactic units means that, unlike English, adverbs and adverbial phrases within the sentence are **never** separated by commas. Compare:

Er konnte ihr jedoch helfen *He was, however, able to help her*

Bringen Sie mir bitte eine Zeitung *Bring me a newspaper, please*

21.5.1 The use of commas with coordinated clauses and

phrases

i.e. those linked by one of the coordinating conjunctions, like *aber*, *oder* and *und* (see **17.1**)

(a) Clauses and phrases joined by *und* or *oder* do not need a comma

> Die alte Dame öffnete ihm die Tür und er ging in den Garten
>
> Christa rief an und er erzählte ihr, was passiert war
>
> Ich gehe morgen ins Theater oder besuche ein Konzert

Parallel subordinate clauses linked by *und* or *oder* do not have a comma between them:

> Er sagte, dass ich sofort kommen müsste und dass er mir etwas sehr Wichtiges zu berichten hätte
>
> Sie wird nicht kommen, weil sie nicht kann oder weil sie einfach keine Lust hat

However, a comma can be used if the writer feels the need to make the sentence clearer or avoid ambiguity:

> Sie begegnete ihrem Trainer, und dessen Mannschaft musste lange auf ihn warten

No comma is necessary before conjunctions with a similar meaning to *oder* and *und*, e.g. *beziehungsweise*, *sowie*, *weder … noch*, etc. (see **17.1.3** and **17.1.4**).

(b) A comma is used before the conjunctions *aber, denn, doch, jedoch* and *sondern*

Er runzelte die Stirn, aber sie sagte nichts

Ich machte Licht, denn es war inzwischen dunkel geworden

Der Lohn ist karg, doch man genießt die abendlichen Stunden

Das Kleid war nicht grün, sondern hellblau

(c) A comma is used between parallel clauses and phrases which have no linking conjunction

Das Licht geht aus, der Vorhang hebt auf, das Spiel beginnt

Berlin, Paris, London, Madrid sind europäische Hauptstädte

21.5.2 The use of commas with subordinate clauses

In principle, **all subordinate clauses are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas**, whether they are introduced by a conjunction or not:

Er fragte, ob ich morgen nach Halberstadt fahren wollte

Weil ich morgen arbeiten muss, werde ich keine Zeit haben

Sie sagte, sie habe diesen Mann nie vorher gesehen

Unsere Lage wäre unmöglich gewesen, hätte er diesen Plan nicht ausgedacht

21.5.3 The use of commas with participial and infinitive clauses

(a) These clauses do not need to be separated by commas from the rest of the sentence

Sie beschloss den Betrag möglichst bald zu überweisen

Ich hoffte in der nächsten Runde zu gewinnen

Diesen Vorgang wollen wir zu erklären versuchen

Ich brauche heute nicht ins Geschäft zu gehen

Aus vollem Halse lachend kam er auf mich zu

Er sank zu Tode getroffen zu Boden

However, a comma can be used if the writer feels the need to make the sense clear or avoid ambiguities, as with the following example, where the comma shows which part of the sentence *heute* belongs to:

Das Kind versprach heute, nichts mehr von dem Kuchen zu essen

Das Kind versprach, heute nichts mehr von dem Kuchen zu essen

(b) A comma is used before an infinitive clause in the following cases

(i) if the infinitive clause is introduced by *(an)statt, außer*, *ohne* or *um* (see **11.2.6**):

Ich konnte nichts tun, um ihn zu beruhigen

Er verließ das Haus, ohne gesehen zu werden

(ii) if the infinitive clause depends on a noun:

Umsonst machte er einen letzten Versuch, seine Frau zu retten

Ich habe nicht die geringste Absicht, ihr 1000 Euro zu leihen

(iii) if the infinitive clause depends on an anticipatory *es* (see **3.6.2e** and **3.6.2f**), or a prepositional adverb (see **11.2.2f**):

Ich konnte es kaum ertragen, ihn so leiden zu sehen

Sie hat ihn daran erinnert, Blumen für seine Mutter zu kaufen

21.5.4 The use of commas with other parts of speech and phrases

i.e. with interjections, exclamations, explanatory phrases, phrases in apposition and parenthetical words and phrases. If these are seen as separate elements they are normally separated from the rest of the sentence by commas, e.g.:

> **Ach**, kannst du morgen wirklich nicht zu uns kommen?
>
> **Kurz und gut**, die Lage ist kritisch
>
> **Wissen Sie**, ich kann Ihnen da leider nicht mehr helfen
>
> Das macht , **grob gerechnet**, vierzig Prozent von unserem Absatz aus
>
> Ich habe jetzt , **wie gesagt**, keine Zeit dazu
>
> Wir wurden durch Herrn Meiring , **den Direktor des Instituts**, aufs Herzlichste empfangen

Comparative phrases introduced by *als* or *wie* are not normally separated off by commas, e.g.:

> Sie ist jetzt wohl größer als ihre ältere Schwester
>
> Dieser Mann sah aus wie ein Schornsteinfeger

21.5.5 Commas with a number of adjectives qualifying a noun

Two or more adjectives qualifying a noun are separated by commas if they are of equal importance, i.e. if they could be linked by *und*, e.g.:

> gute, billige Äpfel (*the apples are good* and *cheap*)

No comma is used if the second adjective forms a single idea with the noun:

gute englische Äpfel (*i.e. English apples which are good*)

In practice, this rule is not always followed consistently (any more than the similar rule in English is), and many German writers use no commas in any series of adjectives.

21.6 Other punctuation marks

German usage differs from English in respect of the use of some other punctuation marks.

21.6.1 The semi-colon is little used in German

In principle, the semi-colon is used as in English. However, a comma or full stop, as appropriate, tends to be preferred in German. In particular, it is much more common in German than in English to have main clauses not linked by a conjunction, and these are commonly separated by commas:

Geh in die Stadt und kaufe Mehl, unterdessen heize ich schon den Ofen an

21.6.2 A colon is used to introduce direct speech

This means that a colon is used rather than a comma after a verb of saying:

Dann sagte sie: „Ich kann es nicht”

Similarly with reported phrases and the like:

Das Sprichwort heißt: Der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm

When a colon introduces a full sentence, it is usually followed by a capital letter, but a small letter is now permitted: *Das Sprichwort heißt: der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm.*

21.6.3 Quotation marks

The first of a set of inverted commas is placed on the line, i.e. **not** above it as in English. This applies equally to single and double quotation marks:

Dann sagte sie: „Ich kann ihn überhaupt nicht verstehen“.

Er fragte mich: „Kennen Sie Brechts Stück, Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder’?”

In practice, double rather than single quotation marks are always preferred in German.

As placing inverted commas on the line was sometimes difficult with conventional typewriters, it became common for a while to place them above, and this remains the case with some less sophisticated e-mail programs. On the other hand, modern word-processing programs normally standardize on the traditional German placing.

21.6.4 The exclamation mark

(a) The exclamation mark is used after interjections and exclamations

Ach! Donnerwetter! Pfui Teufel! Guten Tag!

(b) Commands are followed by an exclamation mark

Komm sofort zurück!	Hören Sie sofort auf!
Seid doch vorsichtig, Kinder!	Einsteigen und die Türen schließen!

Standard usage traditionally required the use of the exclamation mark with commands in German, but this rule is not always followed nowadays, and many Germans prefer to use a full stop, especially if the command is not felt to be particularly forceful.

(c) An exclamation mark can be used after the words of address at the beginning of a letter

Sehr geehrter Herr Dr. Fleischmann! Liebe Petra!

This traditional usage has now largely been replaced by the use of the comma, as in English. However, **if a comma is used**, **a capital letter should not be used** for the first word of the letter proper, as, strictly speaking, it is not the beginning of a sentence, e.g.:

Lieber Martin,

es hat uns sehr gefreut, wieder mal von dir zu hören …

List of sources

The examples illustrating points of grammar and usage have been drawn from a wide range of sources and registers, spoken as well as written. Many of the unattributed examples which are new to this revised edition have been simplified or amended from modern texts, from phrases and sentences heard in conversation or on radio and television, etc. and in large number from the DeReKo corpus of modern spoken and written German compiled at the Institut für Deutsche Sprache in Mannheim (www.ids-mannheim.de). Longer examples quoted verbatim or with minor simplifications have been attributed wherever possible. The following sources have provided such material:

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A. Andersch	H. Fallada	W. Jens	R. Schoof
S. Andres	M.L. Fleißer	U. Johnson	A. Seghers
R. Augstein	M. Frisch	E. Jünger	K. Sonnenberg
I. Bachmann	G. Gaiser	G. Kapp	E. Strittmatter
B. Balden	A. Goes	F.X. Kroetz	A. Surminski
V. Baum	G. Grass	E. Langgässer	P. Süßkind
K. Bednarz	M. von der Grün	Th. Mann	Th. Valentin
W. Bergengruen	B. Grzimek	I. Morgner	M. Walser
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B. Brecht	S. Heym	E.M. Remarque	E. Wiechert
S. Brinkmann	P. Heyse	G. Reuter	G. Wohmann
J. Bumke	W. Hildesheimer	H. von Rimscha	C. Wolf
M. Dönhoff	M. Horbach	H.G.F.	S. Zweig

		Schneeweiß	
F. Dürrenmatt	E.H. Jacob	P. Schneider	G. Zwerenz

Newspapers

The following newspapers or periodicals have provided material. Some titles have been abbreviated as indicated:

BILD	*BILD-Zeitung*	ND	*Neues Deutschland*
BZ	*Berliner Zeitung*	NZZ	*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*
BrZ	*Braunschweiger Zeitung*	NüN	*Nürnberger Nachrichten*
FAZ	*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*	NUZ	*Nürnberger Zeitung*
	forum	OH	*Odenwälder Heimatzeitung*
	FOCUS		(*Die*) *Presse*
FR	*Frankfurter Rundschau*		*Quick*
HA	*Hamburger Abendblatt*	RhZ	*Rhein-Zeitung*
HMP	*Hamburger Morgenpost*	SGT	*Sankt Galler Tagblatt*
HAZ	*Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*		(*Der*) *Spiegel*
	Horizont		*(Der) Standard*
KlZ	*Kleine Zeitung*		*Stern*
	Kurier	SZ	*Süddeutsche Zeitung*
LV	*Leipziger*		(*Die*) *Welt*

	Volkszeitung	
Lux	*Luxemburger Tageblatt*	(*Die*) *Zeit*
MM	*Mannheimer Morgen*	

In addition, the Baedeker series of travel guides, Knaur's encyclopedia, and Innsbruck university *Vorlesungsverzeichnis* have provided examples, as well as the radio and television stations ARD and SWF.

Bibliography and references

This list gives a selection of the most important works which were consulted for this and previous revisions of *Hammer's German Grammar and Usage*. Major dictionaries and general accounts of German and English grammar are given first, followed by a selection of works containing more extensive accounts of specific points of grammar and usage, arranged according to the individual chapters of this book.

In principle, the entries are limited to major reference books on each topic; users requiring more detailed information, especially in journals and collected volumes, are referred to: H. Frosch et al., *Bibliographie zur deutschen Grammatik 1994–2002* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2003), *Bibliographie zur deutschen Grammatik 2003–2007* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2008) and *Bibliographie zur deutschen Grammatik 2008–2012* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2013). Details of these and more recent work on German grammar are available online through the *grammis* website of the *Institut für Deutsche Sprache* in Mannheim (http://hypermedia.ids-mannheim.de/call/public/bib.ansicht).

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Glossary

One of the perennial difficulties about grammar and language is the confusion caused by the fact that the same feature is often known by a number of names – and this problem can be compounded by the fact that what appears to be the same name can refer to quite different features in other languages and national traditions. Thus what are called in this book the 'progressive tenses' of English (e.g. *I am doing, she will be working*) are sometimes called 'continuous tenses', and the German 'past tense' has often been labelled the 'imperfect tense' or the 'preterite'.

In order to address this difficulty the English terminology in this book has been standardized as far as possible by adopting the recommendations of the Linguistic Association of Great Britain, which can be downloaded at http://lagb-education.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/terminology-9-clean.pdf, with further reference to R.L. Trask, *A Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistics*, Routledge: London and New York 1993. On the suggestion of a kind correspondent the most usual German equivalents for all terms are given in italics under the English entry; these have been taken in the main from the most recent edition of the DUDEN *Grammatik der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*, 8th ed., Dudenverlag: Mannheim, Wien, Zürich 2009, augmented by consultation with other works.

The explanations include references to sections or chapters where more detail is given. Words in small capitals are themselves explained in the glossary.

accusative
Akkusativ/Wenfall

a CASE (2.2) which indicates the DIRECT OBJECT of TRANSITIVE verbs (16.3): *Ich sehe* **den Hund**. It is also

	used after some PREPOSITIONS (18.1, 18.3): *Ich gehe durch* **den Wald**, as well as in some ADVERBIAL constructions (2.2.2): *Sie kommt* **jeden Tag**.
accusative object *Akkusativobjekt*	the DIRECT OBJECT of the verb, in the ACCUSATIVE case (16.3): *Der Wolf frisst* **den Esel**.
adjective *Adjektiv*	a word which modifies, or describes a NOUN (Chapter 6). **Attributive** adjectives are used before a noun: *die* **schöne** *Stadt*; **predicative** adjectives are typically used after a COPULAR VERB (16.6): *Die Stadt ist* **schön**.
adverb *Adverb*	a word which modifies a VERB, an ADJECTIVE or a whole CLAUSE, often giving extra information on **how**, **when**, **where** or **why** (Chapter 7): *Sie singt* **gut**; *Sie war* **sehr** *freundlich*.
adverbial *Adverbiale/freie Angaben*	any part of a SENTENCE which has the **function** of an ADVERB (16.1.4). It can be a single word (an adverb), or a phrase, or a whole CLAUSE: *Sie sang* **gut**; *Sie sang* **mit einer hellen Stimme**; *Sie sang*, **als sie in das Zimmer kam**.
agreement *Kongruenz*	copying a grammatical feature from one word to another, so that certain words have ENDINGS according to the words they are used with or refer to. In German, DETERMINERS and ADJECTIVES 'agree' with the NOUN (4.1, 6.1): **dieses** *Buch*; *mit* **meinem neuen** *Auto*, and VERBS 'agree' with their

	SUBJECT (10.1.4): *ich* **singe**, *du* **singst**.
apposition *Apposition*	a phrase used to modify a NOUN PHRASE without a connecting PREPOSITION is '**in apposition**' to it (2.6): *Wilhelm*, **der letzte deutsche Kaiser** , *starb im Exil*.
article *Artikel*	the most important of the DETERMINERS (Chapter 4). German has a **definite article der**, **die**, **das**, etc. (= English *the*) and an **indefinite article ein**, **eine**, etc. (= English *a*).
auxiliary verb *Hilfsverb*	a VERB used in combination with the INFINITIVE or PAST PARTICIPLE of another verb to form a COMPOUND TENSE or the PASSIVE (10.3–10.4): *Karin* **hat** *einen Hund* **gekauft**, or, in the case of the MODAL AUXILIARIES (Chapter 15), to indicate the attitude of the speaker with regard to what is being said: *Sie* **soll** *sofort* **kommen**.
bracket *Verbalklammer/ Satzklammer*	the '**bracket**' **construction** is typical of German CLAUSES, with most words and phrases in a clause bracketed between two parts of the verb (19.1): *Wir* **[kommen** *um* 17 *Uhr in Innsbruck* **an]**.
cardinal number *Kardinalzahl*	the numerals used in counting (8.1): **eins**, **zwei**, … **hundert**.
case *Fall/ Kasus*	indicates the function of a NOUN PHRASE in the CLAUSE (Chapter 2). German has four **cases**: NOMINATIVE **der Igel**; ACCUSATIVE **den Igel**; GENITIVE **des Igels** and DATIVE **dem Igel**.

clause *Satz*	a part of a SENTENCE with a VERB and its COMPLEMENTS (16.1). A **main clause** can stand on its own: **Dein Vater kommt**. A **subordinate clause** (Chapter 17) is dependent on another clause in the sentence and is usually introduced by a CONJUNCTION: *Ich weiß*, **dass dein Vater kommt**.
comparative *Komparativ/Steigerung*	the form of an ADJECTIVE (6.5) or ADVERB (7.7) used to express a comparison: **schneller**, **höher**, **weiter**.
complement *Ergänzung/ Komplement*	an element in a CLAUSE which is closely linked to the VERB and completes its meaning (16.1). The most important complements of the verb are its SUBJECT and OBJECTS.
complement clause *Ergänzungs(neben)satz*	a **subordinate** CLAUSE which has the same role as a verb COMPLEMENT (17.2): **Dass sie gekommen war** , *hat mich erstaunt* (the clause is the SUBJECT of the verb); *Ich wusste*, **dass sie gekommen war** (the clause is the DIRECT OBJECT of the verb).
compound tense *zusammengesetzte/ mehrteilige Verbform*	a TENSE formed by using an AUXILIARY VERB with the INFINITIVE or PAST PARTICIPLE of another **verb** (10.3), e.g. the PERFECT tense: *Sie* **hat geschlafen**, or the FUTURE tense: *Sie* **wird kommen**.
compound word *Kompositum*	a word formed by joining two or more words (20.1): **Kindergarten**, **dunkelrot**.
conditional würde-*Form*	a compound form of KONJUNKTIV II formed from the **past subjunctive**

	form of the AUXILIARY VERB *werden*, i.e. **würde**, and the INFINITIVE of another verb (10.5.2c, 14.2.3): *Ich* **würde gehen**.
conditional sentence *Konditionalsatz*	a SENTENCE which expresses a condition, i.e. 'If X, then Y' (14.3). The SUBJUNCTIVE mood is often used in conditional sentences in German.
conjugation *Konjugation/ Verbflexion*	the forms or INFLECTION of a VERB, in particular the pattern of ENDINGS and/or **vowel changes** which show AGREEMENT with the SUBJECT and indicate the various TENSES or the MOOD, etc. (Chapter 10): *ich* **komme**, *du* **kommst**, *wir* **kamen**, *wir* **kämen**, etc.
conjunction *Konjunktion*	a word used to link CLAUSES within a SENTENCE (Chapter 17). **Coordinating conjunctions** link main clauses (e.g. **und**, **aber**), and **subordinating conjunctions** introduce subordinate clauses (e.g. **dass**, **obwohl**, **weil**, **wenn**).
copular verb *Kopulaverb*	a **linking** VERB, which typically links the SUBJECT with a PREDICATE COMPLEMENT, i.e. an ADJECTIVE or a NOUN PHRASE in the NOMINATIVE case (16.6). The most frequent **copular verbs** in German are **sein**, **werden** and **scheinen**: *Er* **ist** *ein guter Lehrer*; *Die alte Frau* **wurde** *blass*.
count noun *zählbares Substantiv*	a NOUN referring to a thing or object which can be counted. Count nouns, unlike MASS NOUNS, can be used in the PLURAL and with the

	indefinite ARTICLE.
dative *Dativ/Wemfall*	a CASE (2.5) used to mark some OBJECTS of the VERB: *Sie hat* **meiner Schwester** *die CD gegeben*, *Ich helfe* **meinem Bruder**. It can also indicate **possession**: *Sie zog* **dem Kind** *die Jacke aus*, it is used after some ADJECTIVES (6.3.1): *Er sieht* **meinem Vater** *ähnlich*, and after many PREPOSITIONS (18.2–18.3): *Er hat mit* **den Kindern** *gespielt*.
dative object *Dativobjekt*	a COMPLEMENT of the VERB in the DATIVE case (16.4). With some verbs it is the only object: *Sie wollte* **dem kleinen Mädchen** *helfen*; with verbs which also have an ACCUSATIVE (DIRECT) OBJECT, it is the INDIRECT OBJECT: *Sie hat* **dem kleinen Mädchen** *das Heft gegeben*.
declension *Deklination/Flexion*	the pattern of ENDINGS (the 'INFLECTION') of a NOUN (1.3), an ADJECTIVE (6.1), or a DETERMINER (4.1, Chapter 5) which show CASE, NUMBER and GENDER: **der gute Hund**, **des guten Hundes**, **den guten Hunden**.
demonstrative *Demonstrativ*	a DETERMINER or PRONOUN (5.1) which points to something specific, e.g. **dieser**, **jener**.
derivation *Derivation/ Wortbildung*	forming words from other words, typically by using SUFFIXES and/or PREFIXES (Chapter 20): **be** *glaub* **igen** (< *Glaube*), *Gesund* **heit** (< *gesund*).
determiner *Artikelwort*	a function word used with NOUNS (Chapters 4 and 5). Determiners

include the ARTICLES (**der**, **ein**), the DEMONSTRATIVES (**dieser**, etc.), the POSSESSIVES, (**mein**, etc.) and INDEFINITES (**einige**, **viele**, etc.). They typically come **before** ADJECTIVES in the NOUN PHRASE.

direct object
direktes Objekt
a verb COMPLEMENT, typically a person or thing directly affected by the action (16.3). It is in the ACCUSATIVE case. *Der Löwe fraß* **den Esel**; *Die böse Frau schlug* **den Hund**.

direction complement
Direktivergänzung
a LOCATIVE COMPLEMENT used with verbs of **motion**, indicating **where** the SUBJECT is going or **where** the DIRECT OBJECT is being put (16.8): *Sie fuhr* **nach Ulm**; *Er stellt den Besen* **in die Ecke**.

ending
Endung/Flexiv
a SUFFIX which gives grammatical information, e.g. about CASE, NUMBER or TENSE. All the **endings** of a NOUN, ADJECTIVE or DETERMINER make up its DECLENSION; all the endings of a VERB make up its CONJUGATION.

feminine
Femininum
one of the three GENDERS into which nouns are classified (1.1), shown by the INFLECTION of the DETERMINER or ADJECTIVE in the NOUN PHRASE.

finite verb
finites Verb
a form of the VERB which has an ENDING in agreement with the SUBJECT (10.1): *Ich* **komme**; *Wir* **haben** *geschlafen*; *Sie* **wurden** *betrogen*; *Ihr* **könnt** *gehen*.

future tense
Futur/Futur I
a TENSE formed with the auxiliary VERB **werden** and an INFINITIVE

(10.3), and used to refer to future time or express a supposition (12.3): *Ich* **werde** *das Buch nicht* **lesen**.

future perfect
Futurperfekt/Futur II

a tense formed with the AUXILIARY VERB **werden** and a **compound** INFINITIVE (10.3), used to refer to an action or event which will occur before another in the future, or to a supposition about a past event: *Sie* **wird** *das Buch* **gelesen haben** (12.3).

gender
Genus

the division of nouns into three classes in German, called MASCULINE, FEMININE and NEUTER (1.1). The **gender** of a noun is shown by the ENDINGS of the DETERMINER or ADJECTIVE in the NOUN PHRASE: **der** *Mann*, **diese** *Frau*, **klares** *Wasser*.

genitive
Genitiv/Wesfall

a CASE which is mainly used to show possession or to link NOUNS together (2.3): *das Buch* **meines Vaters**; *die Geschichte* **dieser Stadt**. A few verbs have a **genitive** OBJECT (16.7), and it is used after a few PREPOSITIONS (see 18.4): *trotz* **des Wetters**.

imperative
Imperativ

a MOOD of the VERB used to give commands or instructions, or to make a request (14.1): **Komm** *hierher!* **Seid** *vorsichtig!* **Steigen Sie** *bitte ein!*

indefinite
indefinites Pronomen, indefinites Artikelwort

an **indefinite** PRONOUN or DETERMINER is one which does not refer to a specific person or thing (5.5): **etwas**, **jemand**, **irgendwelcher**.

indicative
Indikativ
the most usual MOOD of the VERB, used to make statements or ask questions (Chapter 14): *Sie* **kam** *gestern.* **Siehst** *du das Licht?*

indirect object
indirektes Objekt
a verb COMPLEMENT, typically a person indirectly affected by the action expressed by the VERB, especially someone who is being given something or benefiting from the action (16.4.1). It is in the DATIVE case: *Sie gab* **ihrem Vater** *das Geld.*

indirect speech
indirekte Rede
a construction by which what was said is incorporated into a sentence rather than given in the speaker's original words (14.4). Compare '**direct speech**' *Er sagte: „Ich bin heute krank"* with the corresponding '**indirect speech**': *Er sagte, dass er heute krank sei.*

infinitive
Infinitiv
the basic form of a verb, ending in -***en*** or -***n*** (10.1–10.2, 11.1–11.4): ***kommen*** , ***betteln*** , ***tun*** . It is the form of the **verb** given in dictionaries.

infinitive clause
Infinitivsatz
a **subordinate** clause containing an infinitive, typically with the particle ***zu*** (11.2): *Sie hat mir geraten* ***nach Hause zu gehen*** .

inflection
Flexion/Beugung
changing the form of words, most often by endings, to indicate some grammatical idea, like case or tense. The **inflection** of nouns, adjectives and determiners is called declension, while the **inflection** of verbs is called conjugation.

inseparable verb
a **prefixed** verb whose prefix is not

untrennbares Verb	stressed and always remains attached to the **verb** (10.2.1, 20.5): ***besuchen*** , ***erwarten*** , ***verstehen*** .
interrogative *interrogativ*	**interrogative** determiners, adverbs or pronouns (5.3, 7.6) are used to ask a question: ***Welches*** Hemd kaufst du? **Warum** geht er nicht? **Wem** sagst du das?
intransitive verb *intransitives Verb*	a verb is **intransitive** if it does not have an accusative (direct) object (16.3): *Wir* ***schwimmen*** ; *Dort* ***stand*** *er und* ***wartete*** *auf Luise*; *Meine Schwester* ***hilft*** *mir.*
irregular verb *unregelmäßiges Verb*	a verb with a conjugation which does not follow the pattern of the weak verbs or the strong verbs (10.1–10.2, 10.6): ***wissen*** – ***ich weiß*** – ***ich wusste*** – ***gewusst*** .
locative complement *Lokativergänzung*	a verb complement (16.8) involving location, in particular one indicating direction or destination with verbs of movement (the direction complement) or place with verbs referring to position (the place complement).
masculine *Maskulinum*	one of the three genders into which nouns are divided (1.1), shown by the inflection of the determiner or adjective in the noun phrase.
mass noun *Stoffsubstantiv/ Stoffname*	a noun referring to an indivisible entity, typically a substance or an abstract idea: ***das Gold*** , ***der Frieden*** . Mass nouns, unlike count nouns, are not used with the indefinite article or in the plural.
modal auxiliaries *Modalverb*	the verbs ***dürfen*** , ***können*** , ***mögen*** , ***müssen*** , ***sollen*** and

	wollen , which indicate the attitude of the speaker with regard to what is being said (Chapter 15). They are highly irregular (10.2.2), and as auxiliary verbs they are normally only used with the infinitive of another verb (11.3): *Sie* ***darf spielen*** ; *Ich* ***musste gehen*** ; *Du* ***sollst*** *das Fenster* ***aufmachen*** .
modal particle *Modalpartikel*	a small word which indicates the speaker's attitude to what is being said (Chapter 9): *Es gibt* ***ja*** *hier nur zwei gute Restaurants* (assuming agreement), *Das Bier ist* ***aber*** *kalt!* (surprise).
mood *Modus*	forms of the verb which indicate the speaker's attitude (Chapter 14). German has three **moods**: indicative (neutral, factual): *Er* ***geht*** *nach Hause*; imperative (commands, requests): ***Geh*** nach Hause! and subjunctive (possibly not factual): *Wenn er nach Hause* ***ginge***,...
neuter *Neutrum*	one of the three genders into which nouns are divided (1.1), shown by the inflection of the determiner or adjective in the noun phrase.
nominative *Nominativ/Werfall*	a case (2.1) which most often indicates the subject of a verb (16.2): ***Du*** lügst; ***Der Hund*** bellt. It is also used in the predicate complement of copular verbs (16.6): *Ich bin* ***der neue Lehrer*** , or when a word occurs in isolation (i.e. not as part of a full sentence).
non-finite	a form of the verb which does not

infinite Verbform	have an ending in agreement with the subject (10.1–10.2), i.e. the infinitive and the participles.
noun *Substantiv/Nomen*	a type of word which typically refers to a person, a living being, a thing, a place or an idea and can normally be used with a **definite** article: ***der Tisch*** , **die Idee**, **das Pferd**. German nouns are all classified into one of three genders.
noun phrase *Nominalgruppe/ Nominalphrase*	A set of words which consists of at least one noun or pronoun and any other words accompanying it, i.e. a determiner and/or an adjective: ***Brot*** , ***weißes Brot*** , ***das weiße Brot*** .
number *Numerus*	the grammatical distinction between singular and plural.
object *Objekt*	certain complements of the verb are known as its **objects** (Chapter 16), i.e. the direct object, the indirect object and the prepositional object.
ordinal number *Ordinalzahl*	the form of a numeral used as an adjective: *sein* ***zwanzigster*** *Geburtstag* (8.2).
participle *Partizip*	non-finite forms of the verb (10.1–10.2, 11.5) which are used as adjectives or to form the compound tenses. German has two **participles**: the present participle, e.g. ***spielend*** , and the past participle, e.g. ***gespielt*** .
passive (voice) *Passiv*	a form of a verb where the doer of the action is not necessarily mentioned and the subject is typically a person or thing to which something happens (10.4, Chapter

13): German has two **passive** constructions, using the auxiliary verbs ***werden*** or ***sein*** and the past participle: *Die Schlange* ***wurde*** *(von dem Jäger)* ***getötet*** ; *Die Stadt* ***war zerstört*** . The **passive voice** contrasts with the (more frequent) **active voice**: *Der Jäger tötet die Schlange.*

past tense
Präteritum

the **simple** (i.e. one-word) tense (10.2) used to relate an action, state or event in the **past** (12.2): *Ich* ***kam*** *an*; *Sie* ***sah*** *mich.*

past participle
Partizip II

a non-finite form of the verb, typically with the prefix ***ge-*** and the ending ***-t*** with weak verbs or ***-en*** with strong verbs (10.1–10.2): ***gekauft*** ; ***gekommen*** . It is most often used to form compound tenses (10.3), or as an adjective (11.5).

perfect tense
Perfekt

a compound tense formed with the present tense of the auxiliary verb ***haben*** or ***sein*** and the past participle (10.3). It is used to link a past action, state or event to the present, or (especially in spoken German) to relate an action, state or event in the past (12.2): *Ich* ***habe*** *sie* ***gesehen*** ; *Sie* ***sind gekommen*** .

person
Person

a grammatical category indicating the person speaking, i.e. the '**first**' **person**: ***ich*** , ***wir*** ; the person addressed, i.e. the '**second**' **person**: ***du*** , ***ihr*** , ***Sie*** ; or other persons or things, i.e. the '**third**' **person**: ***er*** , ***sie*** , ***es*** (Chapter 3). The finite verb

has endings in agreement with the **person** and number of its subject (10.1).

personal pronoun
Personalpronomen
simple words standing for the various persons or referring to a noun phrase (Chapter 3): ***ich*** , ***mich*** , ***mir*** , ***du*** , ***sie*** , etc.

place complement
Lokativergänzung
a locative complement with verbs referring to **position**, indicating **where** something is situated (16.8): *Die Flasche* ***steht auf dem Tisch*** ; *Ich* ***wohne in Berlin*** .

pluperfect tense
Plusquamperfekt
a compound tense formed with the past tense forms of the auxiliary verb ***haben*** or ***sein*** and the past participle (10.3), and used in the context of a statement in the past tense to relate an action, state or event in the more distant past (12.4): *Ich* ***hatte*** *sie* ***gesehen*** ; *Sie* ***waren gekommen*** .

plural
Plural/Mehrzahl
a grammatical term referring to **more than one** person or thing, whereas singular refers to just one. German nouns have special endings to show the **plural** (1.2).

possessive
Possessivpronomen, possessives Artikelwort
a word used to indicate **possession** (5.2), either as a determiner: ***sein Fahrrad*** , or as a pronoun: *das ist* ***meines*** .

predicate complement
Prädikativergänzung
the typical verb complement with a copular verb, normally an adjective or a noun phrase in the nominative case which describes the subject (16.6): *Mein neuer BMW* ***ist rot*** ; *Er* ***wird*** *bestimmt* ***ein guter Tennisspieler*** .

prefix
Präfix

an element added to the beginning of a word to form another word (Chapter 20): ***Ur*** wald, ***un*** glücklich, ***ver*** bessern, ***weg*** gehen.

preposition
Präposition

a word used to introduce a noun phrase and typically indicating position, direction, time, etc. (Chapter 18): ***an*** , ***auf*** , ***aus*** , ***neben*** , ***ohne*** , etc. All German **prepositions** are followed by a noun phrase in a particular case: *Er kam* ***ohne seinen Hund*** (acc.); *Er kam* ***mit seinem Hund*** (dat.); *Er kam* ***wegen seines Hundes*** (gen.).

prepositional adverb
Präpositionaladverb/ Pronominaladverb

a compound of ***da*** (***r***)- with a preposition, typically used as a pronoun referring to things (3.5, 16.5.14): ***darauf*** 'on it', 'on them', ***damit*** 'with it', 'with them'.

prepositional object
Präpositionalobjekt

a complement of the verb introduced by a preposition (16.5). Typically, the **preposition** does not have its usual full meaning, and the choice of **preposition** depends on the individual **verb**: *Wir warten* ***auf meine Mutter*** ; *Sie warnte mich* ***vor dem großen Hund*** .

prepositional phrase
Präpositionalphrase

the combination of a noun phrase with a preposition: ***an diesem Tag*** , aus dem Haus, ***zwischen den Häusern*** .

present participle
Partizip I

a non-finite form of the verb, formed by adding the suffix - ***d*** to the infinitive (10.1–10.2): ***leidend*** , ***schlafend*** . It is used most often as an adjective (11.5): *das* ***schlafende*** *Kind.*

present tense
Präsens

the simple tense (10.2) used to relate something going on at the moment of speaking, or which takes place regularly or repeatedly (12.1): *Jetzt* ***kommt*** *sie*; *In Irland* ***regnet*** *es viel.*

principal parts
Stammformen

the **three main forms** in the conjugation of a verb, i.e. the infinitive, the past tense and the past participle (10.1–10.2): ***machen*** – ***machte*** – ***gemacht*** (weak verb); ***kommen*** – ***kam*** – ***gekommen*** (strong verb). The other forms of most verbs are constructed on the basis of these three forms.

progressive tense
Verlaufsform

a **tense** referring to an action in progress, like the English tenses with the verb *to be* and the '**ing**'-**form**, e.g. *She is reading; Have you been waiting?* (12.5). There are no comparable tenses in German.

pronoun
Pronomen

typically a little word which stands for a whole noun phrase already known from the context, e.g. personal pronouns (Chapter 3), e.g. ***ich*** , ***mich*** , ***sie*** ; demonstrative **pronouns** (5.1), e.g. ***dieser*** ; possessive **pronouns** (5.2), e.g. ***meiner*** , ***seines*** ; indefinite **pronouns** (5.5), e.g. ***man*** , ***niemand*** .

reflexive pronoun
Reflexivpronomen

a pronoun in the accusative or dative case referring back to the subject of the verb (3.2). In the third person there is a special form for the reflexive pronoun, ***sich*** . For the other persons the personal

	pronouns are used as reflexive pronouns: *Sie* ***wäscht sich*** ; *Ich habe es* ***mir*** *so* ***vorgestellt*** .
reflexive verb *reflexives Verb*	a verb used in combination with a reflexive pronoun (16.3.5): ***sich erinnern*** (remember), ***sich weigern*** (refuse).
register *Register*	differences of usage linked to different **situations** and **addressees**, typically associated with degrees of formality/ informality, as found, for example, in differences between **spoken** and **written** language.
relative clause *Relativsatz*	a **subordinate** clause used in the function of an adjective to describe a noun: *der Mann,* ***der dort spielt*** . **Relative clauses** are introduced by a relative pronoun (5.4).
relative pronoun *Relativpronomen*	a pronoun which, like English 'who', 'which' or 'that', is used to introduce a relative clause: (5.4): *der Mann,* ***den*** *ich gegrüßt hatte*; *die Männer,* ***denen*** *ich helfen konnte.*
root *Stamm*	the base form of a word, without endings, prefixes or suffixes: *wieder****komm****en,* ***arbeit*** en, *un****interessant*** .
sentence *Satz*	the longest unit of grammar, ending with a full stop in writing. It must have at least one **main** clause: *Else hat mir geantwortet*, and the main clause(s) can have one or more dependent **subordinate clauses**: *Else hat mir geantwortet, dass Sie nicht nach New York gehen wollte.*
sentence pattern	a limited number of combinations

Satzbauplan	of complements occur commonly with German verbs, since many verbs have the same valency. Such combinations are known as **sentence patterns** (16.1.3).
separable verb *trennbares Verb*	a verb with a **stressed** prefix which detaches from the finite verb in main clauses and is placed at the **end** of the clause (10.2.1, 20.6), e.g. ***an*** kommen: *Wir* ***kommen*** *morgen um vierzehn Uhr in Dresden* ***an*** .
singular *Singular/Einzahl*	a grammatical term referring to **one** person or thing, whereas plural refers to more than one. The pronouns ***ich*** , ***du*** , ***es*** and the nouns ***der kleine Hund*** or ***das Kind*** are **singular**.
stress *Betonung*	as in English, one syllable in all German words of more than one syllable is pronounced with rather more force than the others, and this syllable is said to be stressed or bear the **stress** (21.1.6).
strong adjective declension *starke Adjektivflexion*	a set of endings used with adjectives which are like the **endings** of the **definite** article or ***dieser*** (6.1). They are used when there is no determiner in the noun phrase, or when the **determiner** has no **ending** of its own: ***starkes*** Bier, *mein* ***alter*** *Freund.*
strong verb *starkes Verb*	a verb which changes its vowel in the past tense (and often in the past participle, too), and has the ending ***-en*** in the **past participle** (10.1.2, 10.2.1): ***bitten*** – ***bat*** – ***gebeten*** .
subject	the noun phrase in the nominative

Subjekt

case with which the finite verb **agrees** for person and number (10.1.4, 16.2): ***Du kommst*** morgen; ***Die Leute beschwerten*** sich über die Preise. Typically it is the person or thing carrying out the action expressed by the verb.

subjunctive
Konjunktiv

a mood of the verb typically used to indicate that an action, event or state may not be factual (14.2–14.5). There are two forms of the **subjunctive** in German (10.5): ***Konjunktiv I*** is chiefly used to mark indirect speech (14.4): *Sie sagte, er* ***sei*** *nicht gekommen* and ***Konjunktiv II*** indicates **unreal conditions** (14.3): *Ich* ***würde lachen****, wenn sie* ***käme*** .

suffix
Suffix

an element added to the end of a word or root to form a new word by derivation (Chapter 20): *freund****lich*** , *Freundlich****keit*** or, as an inflection in the form of an ending, to give grammatical information: *Kind****er*** , *mach****te*** .

superlative
Superlativ

the form of an adjective (6.5) or adverb (7.7) which expresses the highest degree of comparison: *der* ***höchste*** *Baum*, *das Auto fährt am* ***schnellsten*** .

tense
Tempus/Zeitform

a form of the verb which indicates the **time** of an action, event or state in relation to the moment of speaking (Chapter 12). German has **simple tenses**, of one word (10.2): present *ich* ***warte*** ; past *ich* ***wartete*** and compound tenses (10.3): future

	ich ***werde warten*** ; perfect *ich* ***habe gewartet*** ; pluperfect *ich* ***hatte gewartet*** ; future perfect *ich* ***werde gewartet haben*** .
topic *Topik/Thema*	the **first element** in a **main** clause, before the finite verb (19.2): ***Max*** ist gestern nach Rom gefahren; ***Gestern*** ist Max nach Rom gefahren; ***Nach Rom*** ist Max gestern gefahren. It is typically something we begin the sentence with because we want to say something about it.
transitive verb *transitives Verb*	**transitive** verbs are those which have a direct object in the accusative case (16.3): *Sie* ***sah mich*** ; *Ich* ***grüsste meinen Freund*** ; *Meine Schwester* ***kauft die Bücher*** .
valency/valence *Valenz*	the construction used with a particular verb, i.e. the number and type of complements which it may have to form a **grammatical** clause or sentence (Chapter 16).
verb *Verb*	a type of word which refers to an action, event, process or state: ***schlagen*** , ***passieren*** , ***recyceln*** , ***schlafen*** .
weak adjective declension *schwache Adjektivflexion*	a set of endings used with adjectives when there is a determiner with its own ending preceding it in the noun phrase (6.1): *das* ***starke*** *Bier*, *die* ***jungen*** *Frauen.*
weak masculine noun *schwaches Maskulinum*	one of a small number of masculine nouns which have the ending ***-(e)n*** in the accusative, genitive and

	dative cases in the singular as well as in the plural (1.3.2): *der* ***Affe*** , *den* ***Affen*** , *des* ***Affen*** , *dem* ***Affen*** , *die* ***Affen*** , etc.
weak verb *schwaches Verb*	the regular verbs of German, which form their past tense with the ending - ***te*** and their past participle with the ending - ***t*** (10.1.2, 10.2.1): ***machen*** – ***machte*** – ***gemacht*** .

Index

The index lists all the German and English words and the grammatical topics about which specific information is given in this book. However, individual words in lists illustrating points of grammar are not included. To facilitate finding particular entries, German words are given in regular type, English words in *italics* and grammatical topics in SMALL CAPITALS (with any German terms *ITALICISED*). Main entries are indicated in bold type.

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